After darkness at noon, we wish you joy in the morning

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Erap, foes swap raps

'Bombers wanted President to resign'

By Armand Nocum

THE MOST likely motive for the bombings in Metro Manila was "to compel the President to resign," according to National Security Adviser Alexander Aguirre.

Aguirre yesterday also said on radio station dzRH that the authorities were "not discounting" the hand of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

The MILF was blamed for a series of shopping mall blasts that left one person dead and 30 others injured in Metro Manila in May. Leaders of the rebel group have denied involvement in the attacks, including Saturday's spate of bombings.

But Aguirre said the MILF campaign had since "subsided" after an intense military campaign routed the guerrillas from dozens of training bases in Mindanao.

He did not mention any other group but Joseph Victor "JV" Ejercito blamed the bombings on the opposition, especially former President Fidel V. Ramos and former National Security Adviser Jose Almonte.

"I know the President. He has no stomach for such things," the son of Mr. Estrada by Guia Gomez said in reaction to talks that the Estrada administration could be behind the bombings.

Speculations were rife that a "wag the dog" scenario was being played out by the government to divert public attention from the impeachment trial of the President.

"Wag the Dog" is a Hollywood movie about an American president who launched a war against Alba-

ERAP/ A12

BIG NAMES in the political opposition join hands during a Mass at the Chino RoceS;t01NLEs Bridge (formerly Mendiola) near Malacañang to pray for peace in the aftermath of the killer bombings in Metro Manila. Among them are Teddy Casiño, Frank Chavez and Tingting and Peping Cojuangco. ERIK ARAZAS

'Those children, those poor children'

By Christian V. Esguerra

ISIAS Benavidez, 36, sleeps fitfully, often startled awake by the image of three children lying motionless on top of him after a powerful bomb ripped through the front coach of a Light Rail Transit train on Saturday.

"Those children, those poor children," Benavidez whispers in those moments, through lips partially glued together with dry clotted blood.

"He wants to know what happened to the children. But I tell him to worry instead about himself since he was also badly injured," his sister, Evelyn Calleja, told the Inquirer as she recounted the story.

Benavidez watched helplessly yesterday as fireworks painted the sky outside the window of his room at the Jose Reyes Memorial Medical Center.

He wanted to greet the New Year, but he could hardly speak or move a finger. And he couldn't hear.

The deafening blast that left 14 dead and more than 60 others injured also shattered Benavidez's eardrums.

"Doctors said his eardrums can still be repaired but only through at least a month of continuous treatment," Calleja told the Inquirer in an interview.

Benavidez could barely murmur when this reporter visited him in the hospital room he shares with two other patients.

His burned face, arms, and legs were wrapped in bloodstained bandages. His sister said he often complained that his left arm was "hard as stone" and "felt as if it would explode."

He was gasping for air through his nostrils, which were partially blocked by thick gauze. His asthma was beginning to act up as well, Calleja said.

His sister told the Inquirer Benavidez's story, reconstructed from painful shreds of his memory.

Passengers were stuffed like sardines inside LRT Coach No. 1037 when he boarded the train at the Gil Puyat Station around noon Saturday. He planned to spend New Year's Eve with his brother in Valenzuela City.

Passengers were carrying holiday gifts, toys, and fruits for *media noche*. Children were pinned among

THOSE/ A12

ATTACK on the Innocents: President Estrada grimaces at the sight of a young blast victim at the Chinese General Hospital. REUTERS

'President gambling with lives for power'

By Dona Pazzibugan and Andrea T. Echavez

OPPOSITION groups have blamed President Estrada for the unsolved bombings in Metro Manila.

Datu Haj Alonto, convenor of the Mindanao War Victims and the Kongreso ng Mamamayang Pilipino (Kompil) II, said Muslims believed that the President was behind the bombings.

Alonto, who had just come from a Mass and indignation rally at the Don Chino Roces Bridge (formerly Mendiola) in Manila, told the Inquirer over the phone yesterday that Mr. Estrada was out "to gamble everything, including people's lives, in order to remain in power."

He said the attacks were being blamed on Muslims again, like the mall bombings last summer when "26 innocent Muslim construction workers were arrested and continued to be detained without charges since the police can't come up with any."

Militant groups belonging to the Estrada Resign Movement said the bombings were part of a plot to draw attention away from the impeachment trial.

They said the attacks would serve as an excuse to crack down on protest leaders and to discourage people from attending protest actions.

A martial law veteran said Mr. Estrada was "more evil" than the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos because the latter did not sacrifice innocent civilians in the stage-managed bombings immediately before he imposed martial law in 1972.

"I accuse as the mastermind of

PRESIDENT/ A12

Their hands yell 'Happy New Year'

By Agnes E. Donato

AS FIREWORKS lit up the skies last night, a group of people did not hear the bangs, fizzes and whistles.

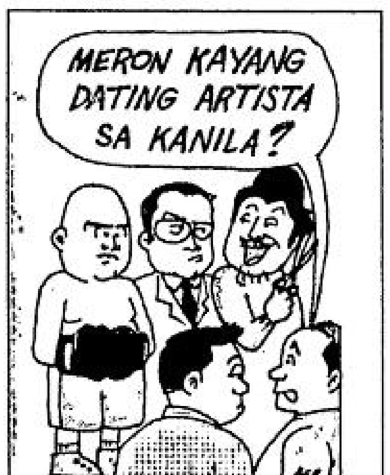
And as much as they might have wanted to scream out their greeting, "Happy new year," they had only their quiet hands to do the yelling for them.

"All this aside, the speech and hearing-impaired celebrate New Year's Day much like everybody else," said Edmund Cortez.

Cortez, 31, is president of Precious Community, an organization of persons with disabilities who meet regularly at the Paco Church in Manila.

Cortez was elected president because, unlike the other members of

THEIR/ A3



MERON KAYANG DATING ARTISTA SA KANILA?

Net search reveals Jose Velardes in US

By Frank Cimatu
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—The most popular "Jose Velarde" in the United States is a strawweight boxer from New Mexico whose achievement was four knockouts and a loss in a 12-round decision in his final fight in 1997.

His overall fight record was 23 wins and 27 losses.

Another prominent "Jose Velarde" is a scientist of the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico, whose team made headway

NET/ A3

Rightist groups tagged as suspects

By Dave Veridiano,
Alcuin Papa
and Philip Tubeza

POLICE generals who met with President Estrada yesterday pointed to rightist groups as their initial suspects in Saturday's spate of bomb attacks in Metro Manila, according to Mr. Estrada's spokersperson Ernesto Maceda.

"At this moment, we cannot rule out the fact that this could really be an ultra-right effort to destabilize the government," Maceda said in an ambush interview last night.

The police generals "have apparently gotten some kind of admission from suspects in custody," he said.

The President has instructed investigators to "work overtime and double-time" to unmask the culprits, Maceda said.

Metro Manila police chief Director Edgardo Aglipay and 15 other regional directors have been directed to cancel all their leaves and passes for the holidays and report for work while the metropolis remains under red alert.

The five bombs that killed at least 14 people and wounded around 90 others appear to have a "signature," a bomb expert told the Inquirer yesterday, as police released two suspects after failing to find any evidence linking them to the blasts.

One suspect apparently turned out to be a man calling to see if his daughter was safe, while the other was nothing more than a tired of-

RIGHTIST/ A12

Estrada sends chilling messages to business community

By Amando Doronila

ANALYSIS

PRESIDENT Estrada fired an ominous parting shot three days before the New Year when he said that he would explode a "bombshell" revealing a list of corporations that have piled up huge unpaid debts to the government. These corporations belong to cronies of past presidents, he said.

Mr. Estrada said the nonpayment of these debts, not the crisis of confidence on his leadership, had led to the "worsening" of the economy.

This warning is more than an attempt to shift the blame of the deteriorating economy—that, to my mind, is the decisive battleground on which the life of this presidency will be fought—to the private business sector that has defected en masse from his administration.

The President's statement sent three chilling messages that we can ignore only at our peril.

First, he is warning that he would unleash a reign of terror of vindictiveness against his political opponents and businessmen who have joined the campaign to remove him from office if he were acquitted in the impeachment trial.

Second, the warning is an attempt to intimidate witnesses recruited by the prosecution and banks to testify and supply evidence on presidential transactions in the trial that resumes tomorrow.

Third, the warning foreshadows a retaliation campaign, post-acquittal, against opponents that could plunge the country into deeper conflict in which no prisoners would be taken.

The threatening tone of his warn-

ESTRADA/ A12

Second FRONT PAGE

SINO BA'NG DESPERADO? SINO BA'NG MAKIKINABANG?

Bombings alarm prosecutors

If it was a 'message, this is too insane... very disturbing'

By Martin P. Marfil

THE BOMBINGS that killed 14 and injured nearly a hundred people in Metro Manila the other day have prompted prosecutors pursuing the impeachment case against President Estrada to take precautions to ensure that the trial continues.

This was revealed yesterday by two congressmen who noted that even before the bombings, they were already being warned against acts of reprisal and vengefulness.

Quezon City Rep. Feliciano Belmonte, the head of the House prosecution team, said the prosecutors were working on the assumption that Saturday's bombings might be some kind of "message" to the team.

If it was indeed a "message," Belmonte said they were still trying to determine what the "sender" was saying.

"This is too insane...very disturbing...what's the message?" the House minority leader said.

Another prosecutor, Misamis Oriental Rep. Oscar Moreno, said the additional security arrangements were aimed at thwarting any reprisals against the prosecutors and witnesses.

He said that before the bombings, the prosecution team was already on the alert against possible reprisals because of developments in the impeachment trial. He said this state of affairs has been further complicated by the bombings.

"I hate to say this but we're up against the President... There is only one desperate group I see now," he said.

Pressed to identify the group, he said: "It's quite obvious."

Belmonte pointed out that most of the victims were innocent bystanders, mostly belonging to the low-income classes.

This might be an indication that the bombings were not the handiwork of the Left, he said.

"When carrying out terrorist acts, the Left usually targets policemen, politicians and capitalists involved in exploitation," he explained.

Moreno said that the prosecution team was still trying to sift through the data to determine the group behind the attacks.

"The question is who is capable of doing such well-coordinated bombings? Who has the capability? Who has the motive? Who profits? What are the effects?" he said.

He pointed out that the government was already in "hibernation" and had been "paralyzed," giving rise to a situation that any group could exploit.

"(These groups) could intervene and create disturbances of all sorts, including from within (government). I hope cooler heads will prevail over the hawks/war freaks because we can't afford any further deterioration of the situation," Moreno said.

The prosecutors, Belmonte and Moreno said, have been in touch with one another since news of the bombings broke out the other day.

"We're in touch with the team. I have not been advised about the situation concerning the witnesses. But I think they are safe," Belmonte said.

Moreno said that one of their main concerns was the security of the witnesses. "The threat to the witnesses has always been there," he said.

"We have taken precautionary measures. We have been advised to stay put, limit meetings and outside functions, and not go out unnecessarily. But there are limits to these measures because of our lack of resources," Moreno said.

FAMILY Affair. President Estrada hears New Year's Mass in Malacañang with his mother Doña Mary (on wheelchair), First Lady Loi Estrada, bosom buddy Fernando Poe Jr., members of the first family, top government officials and close friends. Others in photo are movie actor Rudy Fernandez, Mr. Estrada's son-in-law Beaver Lopez, daughter Jackie and their baby. VAL HANDUMON

Sin: These are 'trying times'

By Christian B. Esguerra

MANILA Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin yesterday called for self-sacrifice, active involvement and unity in the face of the political and economic crisis gripping the country.

"Trying times call forth the greatness and selflessness in men and women of good will, and it is in this trying times that we must act together and work for the common good," Sin said in his New Year's message.

"I believe it is not coincidental that all of these things are happening in our country during the Jubilee Year. The Holy Year is both a moment of purification, conversion and liberation."

The Cardinal asked Filipinos to try to find peace amid the problems besetting the country, particularly President Estrada's impeachment trial and the gruesome bombings in Mero Manila the other day.

"Peace is cultivating joy in the midst of trials... offering reconciliation in the midst of adversities... (and) promoting true progress and equality," he said.

The public should "examine what went wrong" and "come together as a faith community," he said.

"Now, more than ever, we are called to live out and proclaim truthfulness, justice and righteousness. This is the essential step to conversion," Sin said.

The Cardinal is optimistic that the country would overcome all its problems.

"I am hopeful that our country will be great again. Our country will heed the distinctive role to become a true Christian community. We can truly accomplish this through prayers and sacrifices." ***With a report from Christine Avendaño***

Solon says Estrada may be acquitted even though he's guilty

By Villamor Visaya Jr.
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

SANTIAGO CITY—Rep. Heherson Alvarez said the impeachment trial would show that the President was guilty of the corruption and other charges leveled against him. But he said the President was likely to obtain an acquittal because of the legal maneuvers of his lawyers and the votes of sympathetic senators.

"We can see that he may be acquitted even though he is guilty. We just don't know how they are going to do it," the Isabela congressman, who was one of those who initiated the impeachment complaint in the House of Representatives, said in Filipino.

But Alvarez did not totally discount the possibility of a conviction. He said the prosecution's evidence would pin down the President.

Militant groups earlier said they were guarding against an alleged Malacañang game plan to acquit President Estrada in March when politicians and the people would be focusing on the preparations for the May elections and the trial would be losing momentum.

But even if Mr. Estrada is acquitted, the truth is already out proclaiming his guilt, Alvarez said.

"The truth is staring us in the face," he said, citing the evidence that the prosecution team has presented in the impeachment trial.

Alvarez urged Mr. Estrada to resign saying that resignation was better than conviction.

He warned the President that he would face more rallies and protests, and the economy would suffer a recession starting the first quarter of 2001, if he continues to hold on to the presidency.

He said the President's "non-cooperation" and refusal to heed the clamor of the people would hinder the country's development.

"It would be an unsuccessful service. If he will hold on, the chaos persist," he added.

Mr. Estrada has repeatedly declared in his provincial sorties that he would step down only in 2004 and would not succumb to opposition pressures for him to resign.

Alvarez warned that more students will drop out, health services will suffer and unemployment will increase further because of the possible slowdown of business activities.

He said recession, which is more manageable and less serious than depression, would likely be felt as early as this month as the peso weakens against the US dollar.

"We will sink deeper," he said.

Foreign investors would also be cautious about bringing investments into the country because of the political turmoil, Alvarez said.

With the possible recession, Alvarez said Mr. Estrada would be rendered useless if majority of the people blame him as the culprit for the economic and political crises.

END OF AMERICAN DREAM

Sad Christmas for Capilis of Washington

By Jennie L. Ilustre

WASHINGTON—Two empty chairs at the Christmas table in their new three-bedroom house.

This somehow portrayed the tragic loss of the Capilis, a model Filipino family on their way to fulfilling the American dream.

On Dec. 4, Wilfredo and Luzviminda Capili were crossing a street in College Park, Maryland—about 17 km northeast of this capital city—on their way to work. They never made it.

A car hit them, killing them on the spot, a block away from their dream house, leaving their four children orphaned. An hour later, at about 7 a.m., Karlo, the couple's eldest son, drove by, "wondering why cars were being re-routed."

The case is still under investigation. The shattered immigrant dream merited a four-column story in The Washington Post.

"This would have been our second Christmas here in the US," Karlo, 22, told the INQUIRER. "We were planning a big family reunion."

Tearful reunion

The Capilis and Orozcos, his mother's family, went ahead with the *noche buena* (midnight dinner) and the traditional Christmas reunion of relatives now in the area. But it was not a festive occasion.

Karlo's parents were originally from Angeles, Pampanga. The former Luzviminda Orozco, 50, was known in the clan for her delicious *pancit palabok* (a native noodle).

Karlo said he would deeply miss his parents. His parents "were my best friends," he said. "We did things together—going to the mall, watching movies."

He added, "They say there's no such thing as perfect parents, but Papa and Mama were that—perfect parents."

This sentiment was echoed by his siblings, Wilberto Jr., 20, Christian, 18, and Joyce, 16.

Karlo, a freshman computer student at Prince George's Community College, said the completion of the children's education was their parents' dream. On their request, he shifted from a full-time to part-time job at EU Services in Rockville, Maryland, to better concentrate on his studies.

But that has to change now, Karlo said. "We are determined to keep the house. We will try to do it on our own."

Orozco clan

Wilfredo Orozco, brother of Luzviminda who flew in from Guam, said: "He will have to be strong, now that he is both father and mother in the family. But he won't be alone, we all will be there for him."

Luzviminda's sisters, Consuelo Orozco, Julie Magdodo and Angelita Garcia, all live in College Park, Maryland. Her brothers, Narciso and Gilbert Orozco, reside in Bowie and Gaitherburg, both in Maryland. Rosario Darby is from Richmond, Virginia.

Others who flew in for the Dec. 9 interment were Luzviminda's sister Minnie Huntsinger from Tampa, Florida, and brother Omer Orozco, who came all the way from Frankfurt, Germany. Esperanza Manio, another sister, was expected to arrive from the Philippines.

Wilfredo Orozco said they all loved their sister, who worked diligently as a mail sorter at Prince George's Plaza. He said that as the eldest, Luzviminda, a former history and literature teacher, "helped put us through school."

He said that his brother-in-law and namesake was also the family's eldest and likewise was much loved.

Wilfredo Capili worked in the supply section of Prince George's Hospital Center. "He was a favorite among his co-workers. He was cheerful. He got along well with everyone, and was never a grouser at work."

Filipino community

The tragic death of the Capilis deeply touched the Filipino American community in this city and the nearby states of Virginia and Maryland.

"All of us in the community identify with the family," said Carl Abella, owner of Alpha Travel and president of Samahang Pinagbuklod sa Amerika (SPA). "We have embraced this family as part of the community and we will help in any way we can."

SPA has provided emotional and financial support. Member-organizations contributed $500 and pledged to give more.

Karlo said he was surprise at the show of affinity. "My uncle Omer and I did not expect this generosity. We were there to thank the community and the Philippine Embassy. We appreciate their kindness, but I want to stress that my family has always been self-reliant."

SPA is composed of the Filipino community organizations Luzviminda (Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, Sampaguita Club, D'Pokeno Club, Ilocandia and Friendship USA.

The SPA is known for its charitable projects. It has donated funds, raised from monthly dances, for disaster victims in the Philippines and for medical missions.

It has also helped certain towns in the Philippines build chapels and contributed funds for housing projects for retired priests.

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'Lechon' served at lunch for ex-MILFs

By Froilan M. Gallardo
PDI Mindanao Bureau

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—"I love Mindanao. I also love the Muslims," President Estrada said in Cagayan de Oro last Friday, a holy day for Muslims when they observe *juma-at*, or community prayer day.

But apparently the President and his handlers have not learned their lesson. Recalling the "pig" feast that transpired during the fall of Camp Abubakar in July, roast suckling pig was served along with rice, pancit, sardines and fried chicken at the luncheon (called "boodlefight" in Army parlance) for Mr. Estrada, military officials and 856 alleged Moro Islamic Liberation Front surrenderees.

But most of the 856 rebel returnees stayed away from the "boodlefight" in Camp Evangelista's Alcoseba Hall.

Those who did go to the hall took only bottled water and then walked away.

Most took their lunch at the nearby Army barracks where they cooked their own food.

Mr. Estrada would have committed yet another faux pas if not for the alertness of a staffer who noticed that the presents that Mr. Estrada was to give away to the MILF surrendees contained Ma-ling, or Chinese-made canned pork.

The presents were placed in plastic bags sporting Mr. Estrada's photograph on both sides.

The staffer immediately ordered the 600 cans of luncheon meat taken out of the plastic bags.

Estrada told military officials and rebel returnees that he did not come to Cagayan de Oro City to campaign for his beleaguered presidency.

"Leave [illegible] be, all they do is talk, they don't do anything," Mr. Estrada said of his critics.

He later told reporters during an ambush interview that he would focus on developing Mindanao into the country's food basket, an oft-repeated promise.

Mr. Estrada also promised he would send 100 Muslim scholars to US and Australia every year and provide scholarships to 2,000 children of rebel returnees.

To entice MILF rebels to surrender, Estrada promised more livelihood funds and money to buy back their firearms.

He had a closed-door meeting for about an hour with a select group of MILF commanders.

After he left, the MILF commanders were seen dividing up an undetermined amount of money. The cash came from the President. ***With a report from Jowel F. Canuday, PDI Mindanao Bureau***

Their hands yell 'Happy New Year'

(From page A1)

the group, he can speak with the aid of continuous medication.

His education has also acquainted him with oral language and he can read lips, conversing with others with minimal use of sign language.

"Waiting for the clock to tick the last second of the year is what I find to be the most exciting," said Cortez.

After marking the countdown, he fills his pockets with coins and jangles them, hoping that the coming year would bring more luck than the previous one.

Last Wednesday, the Precious Community gave a Christmas party for its members and the speech- and hearing-impaired residents near the Paco Church.

Some 250 men, women and children started the day with an unusual Mass celebrated by one of the organizers of Precious Community, Fr. Luke Moortgard.

The readings were conducted in braille by two blind girls, while a hearing-impaired person interpreted the Bible using sign language.

After the Mass, the partygoers spent the rest of the morning playing parlor games, including Trip to Jerusalem where instead of music, the twirling of a handkerchief signaled when the players would move or stop.

Tired, they lined up to get a P10 bill each from a curiously thin "Santa Claus," after which they ate a hearty lunch of *pancit* (noodles) and juice.

Togetherness

"For us, Christmas is a time to be together with family and friends. We go to church to thank God for his blessings and then take the kids to their grandparents and godparents," Ricky Bañez shyly told the INQUIRER with the graceful movement of his hands.

Both Ricky, 31, and his wife Novel, 28, were born hearing- and speech-impaired. They were among the residents of Pandacan, Manila, who were invited to the party.

The couple has two children who can speak and hear. The older child, Sheila, 3, said she and her brother, Erick, got clothes and toys from their parents this Christmas.

While maintaining that togetherness was the essence of Christmas, Ricky said gift giving was a very important part of his family's celebration, especially since Novel's birthday falls on Dec. 22.

Expensive gifts are out of the question, he says. A worker in a biscuit factory, Ricky was forced to resign by his employer on Nov. 7.

"He probably got tired of having to sign to communicate with me. He apparently wanted to replace me with a more 'normal' worker," Ricky said, with the help of sign interpreter Veronica de Lima.

Agustin Marquez, 36, also speech- and hearing-impaired, said Ricky's unfortunate experience was all too common.

Like Ricky, Marquez has a similarly disabled wife, Karla, with whom he has two children with normal hearing. He is also jobless.

Skills and talent

Whatever their disabilities, many other-abled persons tend to have special skills and talents.

Riza, 26, for one, plays her own melodic compositions on the keyboards by feeling sound vibrations. She is deaf, mute and blind.

"She is also a wide reader," said De Lima, a volunteer at the Handicapped Center-Lourdes at the Caritas Manila.

When her sign language gets too complicated to be understood, Riza resorts to spelling out the key words. She is so good at it and is probably a better speller than most high school graduates.

"Here we don't treat the disabled like they were inutile. We make them help with the household chores and take care of each other," De Lima said.

The male residents at the center take out the garbage and carry their bedridden companions to the bathroom, De Lima adds.

Riza, for one, is usually assigned to fold the laundry because of her uncanny ability to recognize whose clothes she is folding.

"We don't know how she does it, considering that she doesn't get to touch everybody's clothes all the time. But when she's done folding, we just find all the clothes sorted according to their owner," said De Lima.

Riza grew up at the center, having been left there by her parents after they learned of her disabilities.

"Most parents are embarrassed about having a handicapped child and they lock them up at home. Some even beat them whenever they cannot communicate with them," said Tess Dionisio, a teacher at the Paco Catholic School, who helped Father Moortgard organize Precious Community.

"It is also our aim to make people, especially the parents of the disabled, realize that there is a community here of physically impaired people who have found pride in, and despite, themselves," Dionisio said.

Net search reveals Jose Velardes in US

(From page A1)

in contamination control for semiconductor manufacturing.

Other than that, the "Jose Velardes" in the United States are as mysterious as the "Jose Velarde" of the controversial Equitable PCI Bank accounts.

Senate President Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said a certain Jose Velarde in the US West Coast wrote the impeachment court and claimed to be the true owner of a P500-million account in Equitable PCI Bank.

An Internet search through Lycos' "Whowhere" site revealed nine persons bearing the name Jose Velarde, including seven in California.

There is no "Jose Valhalla," according to Whowhere.

There is a Jose Velarde in Springdale, Arkansas, and a Jose A. Velarde in Phoenix, Arizona.

Those in California include one each in Los Angeles, Bell City, Rosemead, Calexico and Escondido. There is a Jose Velarde residing in Illinois Street in San Diego and a Jose M. Velarde in Tocayo Avenue, also in San Diego.

Their entries include phone numbers and mailing addresses.

A more detailed search, including background checks, criminal and educational records and others could take 10 days and a fee of at least $50 (P2,500). The entries did not list any Filipino-Americans among them.

A search through Ancestry.com showed one Jose Velarde who lived in New Mexico in the 1700s and is one of the ancestors of many Velardes in the state.

A search through the US Yellow Pages showed no "Jose Velarde."

The hairstylist

There is, however, a Jo Velarde, who is a hairstylist in Chula Vista, California.

Business corporations bearing the Velarde name also exist. These are Velarde Concrete Construction Co. in Sylmar, California; Velarde Grading Inc. (listed under Excavating Contractors) in San Diego; Velarde Manufacturing in Fresno; Velarde Upholstery (under Boat Covers and Topping) in Paso Robles; and Velarde Fruits on Cesar Chavez Avenue in Los Angeles.

A search through Google.com showed a Jose Velarde who works as a project manager of the Florida Department of Transportation in Fort Lauderdale in Florida and a high school student in Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Florida.

Switchboard.com, the most popular site for locating people, found 38 Jose Velardes in the US.

Aside from the Jose Velardes in Whowhere.com, there are six Jose Velardes in Texas (El Paso, Fabens, Austin, Houston, Bedford and Dallas).

Others can be found in Round Lake, Illinois; Detroit, Michigan; Orlando and Coral Springs in Florida; Silverspring, Maryland; Springville, Utah; and Pittsboro in North Carolina.

There is a Jose Abran Velarde in Seattle, Washington, as well as a Jose Alberto Velarde in Anaheim, California, and Jose Angel Velarde in Phoenix, Arizona.

A Jose Luis Velarde is in Dallas and San Bernardino, California. Another Jose M. Velarde is in Sta. Fe, New Mexico.

There are three Joseph Velardes in Oakland, California; Smyrna, Georgia; and Mesa, Arizona.

But the Jose Velarde mentioned by Pimentel may just be a dud because the letter was mailed from Angeles City.

A check made by the INQUIRER on Thursday showed that no Jose Velarde lives in the city. The check involved digging through the city's list of voters, telephone directories and baptismal records between 1939 and 1955.

HOW CAN I FIND PERMANENT SUCCESS?
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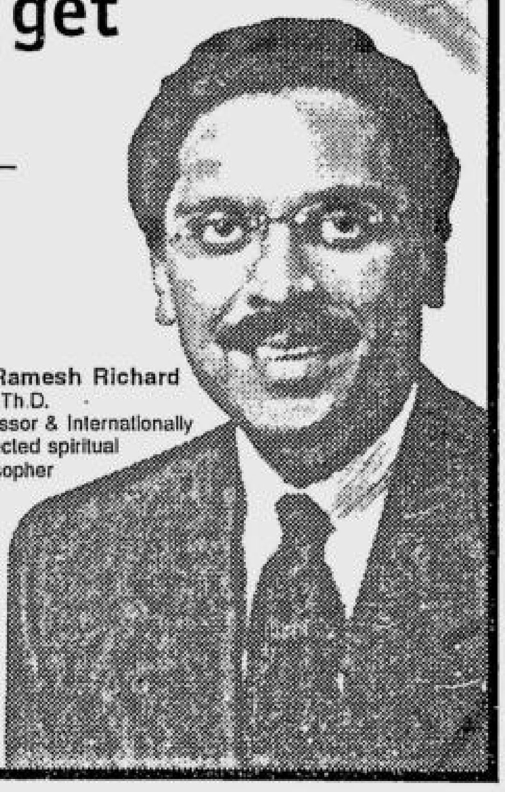

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OPINION

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EDITORIALS

Beasts of burden

WHEN in need of comfort, we are told by the religious among us that God never gives us a burden we cannot bear. In the Year 2000, we had to bear an all-out war against Moro rebels at great costs to life and property and to the development of Mindanao. We had the burden of months of a hostage situation that damaged the country's image abroad, perhaps irreversibly. We had to bear a series of scandals in the Estrada administration. Bear the ignominious history of having a President who's the first to be impeached in Asia.

Just to round up the year and make our burden really heavy, we had to go through five bombings in Metro Manila killing 14 and hurting at least 90 people.

We are either God's very own beasts of burden or God knows we Filipinos can take it and keeps dishing it out. How did we bear the unbearable of the past year? We would like to believe that God carried us on his back for some wonderful, exciting reason known only to him. Which makes the Filipinos God's very own burden.

In time of tragedy

SURE, they were glad to be alive. Others were in a state of shock. Some kept crying and were incoherent. These were expected reactions from people in a New Year mood, who suddenly stared death in the face. But something else was missing. In the extensive interviews our reporters had with the survivors of Bloody Saturday, not a single person expressed outrage. There was no rage for the beasts who committed the mass murders. No rage for government authorities who had failed to protect them. No rage for the blaze of hatreds searing into the country's leadership that has certainly induced a climate of violence. Yet, its victims were without hatred. They had no anger. They did no blaming. Contrast this with the politicians, who before the investigations got going, instantly blamed each other. They could not set aside their hostilities to observe just one day of introspection and mourning. Just one day to express with one voice concern and caring for the dead and the survivors. Just one day of reaching out to the bereaved. Just one day of being one, solid nation in a time of tragedy.

A child

THE TRAGEDY'S most heart-wrenching face was a leg. A cop from the Western Police District had picked it up from the wreckage at the LRT station in Blumentritt thinking it was part of a dismembered doll. Then he saw the blood where the leg had been severed. He placed it inside a plastic bag and brought it to the Jose Reyes Memorial Medical Center (JRMMC).

And the search began for the missing child that owned the leg. The JRMMC and the Chinese General Hospital where bombing victims had also been brought worked with the WPD. The emergency rooms of both hospitals were scenes of bedlam. So, it was hard right then and there to connect the leg with any child. At press time, the leg remained unidentified and disconnected.

Was this child a boy or girl? Where is this child? Could it be that its other parts were cut up by the force of the explosion and no longer is this leg part of a whole child? With its littleness chopped up into pieces, it might have been entombed, and no rescuers on the scene would have noticed. Come to think of it, the little people got the brunt of the hatreds in our society today.

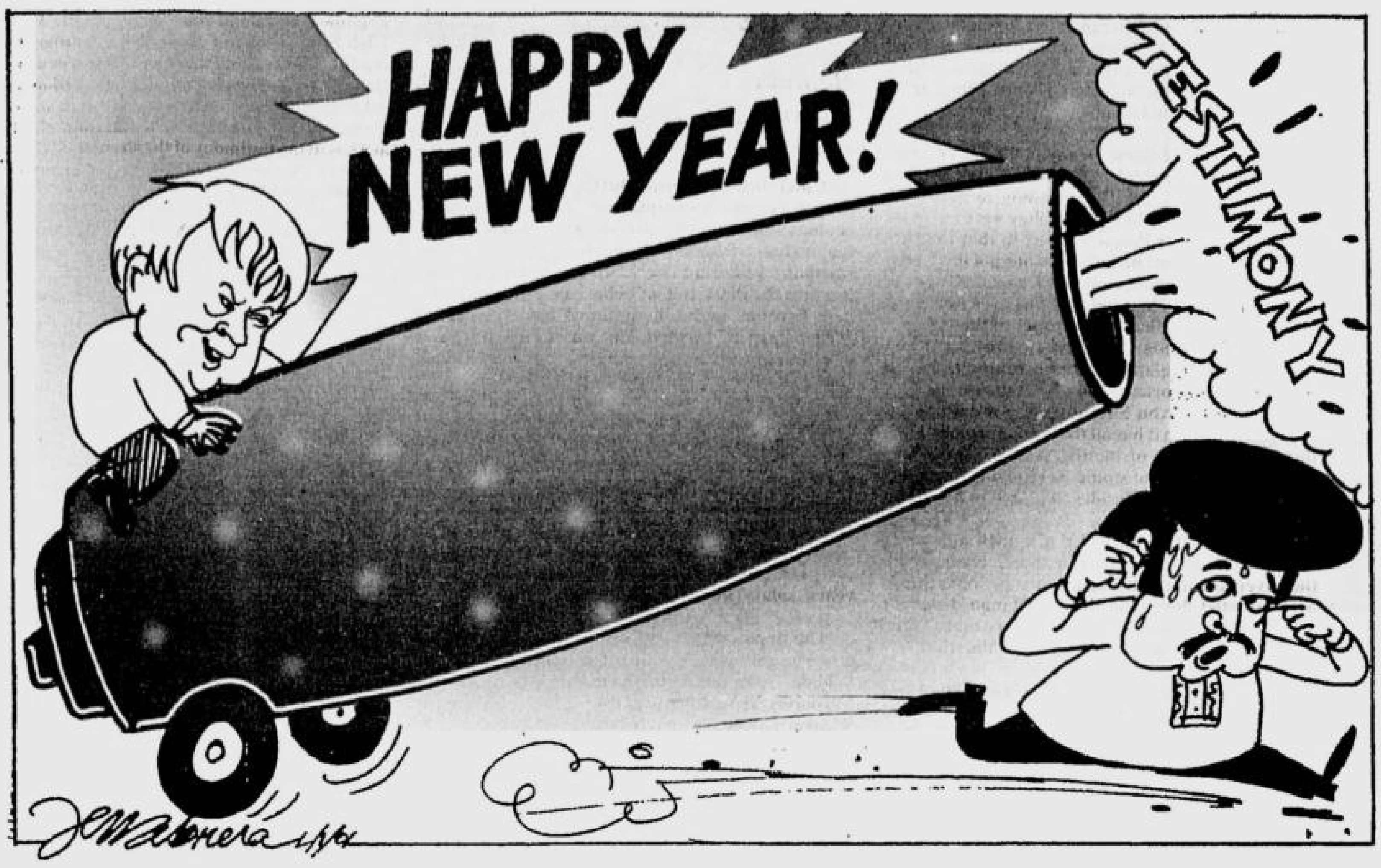
There must be a mother, a father out there who are desperately looking for this child. They would hang on to this leg of their child should that be all there is to find, and be grateful. Their tears would wash the blood off the leg; their love would make the child whole for all time.

Salute

TWO policemen, Insp. Nestor Salvador, officer in charge of the Makati Police Special Weapons and Tactics-Explosive Ordinance Division, and SPO4 Roberto Gutierrez are top cops. Both had extensive training on bomb disposal in the States. Gutierrez, said his colleagues, was known to be the first to approach a suspected bomb. Bomb disposal was his special skill, they said.

So was Salvador always among the first on the scene of a possible bomb site. "Brave," their colleagues said of the two men. Only the brave dared carry the fifth bomb found on Bloody Saturday. Gutierrez was trying to get it out of harm's way and was transporting the explosive to a deserted Petron gas station at the corner of Edsa and Pasay Road in Makati. It exploded and killed him on the spot. His boss, Salvador, was right behind him. He was rushed to Makati Medical where he died Saturday night.

A few good men are enough to make us believe this unspeakable crime will be solved.



It is Erap's fitness for presidency that's on trial

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

HAPPY New Year to all our readers. And many thanks to all those who sent gifts and cards and greeted me by e-mail. I tried to answer all the e-mail greetings but there were so many I may have missed some. So here's Happy New Year greetings for those I missed.

* * *

Tomorrow, the impeachment trial of President Estrada by the Senate will be resumed at 2 p.m. Defense lawyers will cross-examine bombshell witness Clarissa Ocampo, senior vice president of Equitable PCI Bank, who testified that she witnessed President Erap sign the fictitious name, "Jose Velarde," not his real name, on bank documents lending P500 million to his friend William Gatchalian. They are expected to try to destroy the credibility of Ocampo but she is obviously telling the truth (why would she invent such a story) the cross-examination may boomerang on the defense and strengthen her testimony instead, like it did with witness Emma Lim.

So Erap's main line of defense is to have Ocampo's testimony stricken off the record on the ground that Erap's secret Jose Velarde bank account is immaterial and irrelevant to the Articles of Impeachment. An accused, they say, must be charged with specific crimes. But having a secret bank account is not even mentioned in the Articles of Impeachment, they aver.

This is nitpicking, the desperate defense panel is using technicalities to defend its client. If you can't win a case through facts and laws, goes a legal maxim, use technicalities. And that is what the defense panel is doing. It cannot destroy Ocampo's testimony, which is damning to Erap, so it is going to erase it, as if she never testified.

The defense is invoking the Rules of Court in a criminal trial. But the Senate impeachment rules provide that the Rules of Court are only a guide and would be interpreted liberally.

Besides, the impeachment trial is not a criminal or civil trial. It is a political process. The intent is to remove the President from office. If convicted, he will not go to prison or be fined or pay damages. Instead, he would merely be removed from his job. It is his fitness for public office that is on trial, hence, he is kicked out if he is proven unfit. That is why he is barred permanently from public office when convicted.

Certainly, violating our laws by keeping a secret bank account under an assumed name makes him unfit to be President. He is supposed to enforce all the laws of the nation, not violate them. Isn't that violation of the Constitution, one of the charges in the Articles of Impeachment? Doesn't that act betray the trust of the public in their President, also in the Articles of Impeachment?

Besides, accumulating wealth way beyond his legitimate income is a form of graft. Unexplained wealth is part and parcel of graft and corruption, one of the specific charges in the Articles of Impeachment. He accumulated ill-gotten wealth because he committed graft.

Testimony that Erap used an assumed name for this bank account where he has stashed unexplained wealth is just an evidence that he violated our laws and the Constitution, that he committed graft and corruption, and that he betrayed the public's trust. It is not a specific charge against Erap; it is just a piece of evidence leading to the charges. It is just one more proof that Erap is not fit to be President. That evidence is certainly very material and relevant to the Articles of Impeachment.

Suppose Erap murdered one of his mistresses but "murder" is not included in the Articles of Impeachment, does that make him still fit to be President? To think so would make the impeachment trial a farce. It would make the senators, who think so, buffoons and mental retardates.

Court rules were made to make court procedures quick and orderly to render justice fairly and quickly. But they were not made to be used by clever lawyers to thwart justice. They were not made to make a mockery of the administration of justice.

To argue that testimony showing that Erap kept a secret bank account under an alias is not relevant to the charges against him is as fallacious as the argument that Erap has a mandate from the voters to serve until 2004, so he cannot resign or be removed before then. The voters elected him to do his duty faithfully and enforce all our laws until 2004, yes. But when he doesn't do his duty, abuses his power and violates the laws instead, then the people have the right to remove him before his term of office expires. The mandate ceases the moment he violates his oath of office.

All these are very clear and understood by laymen. But lawyers' minds (Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. not exempted) are warped by years of practicing law. It is a curious fact that technicalities in the law seem to put blinders on them. What is clear to the sensible layman is confusing to them. More accurately, they confuse what is already clear by invoking technicalities.

Yet it is drummed in the minds of law students that "substance takes precedence over form," "the intent of the law takes precedence over the letter of the law" (i.e. technicality).

To repeat, what is on trial here is not specific acts of Erap but his entire conduct as President, making him either fit or unfit for the highest position in the land. The senators who don't see him as unfit are blind and therefore are also unfit for their jobs.

* * *

Comments are welcome at asiseeit@pacific.net.ph

Bloody new year

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THE CHRISTMAS lights in my living room glow in the dark, the bubbles of red, green, blue and yellow throwing a fierce iridescence all about. They give no cheer. On the television set, glowing as well in alternate colors, though more palely, a man is talking. He is fairly tall and wiry and sports a crew cut. He is still caught in the drama, or tragedy, of what he has just seen. He gushes out his words.

There, he points to a spot in the coach of a train, a mass of twisted steel littered with debris and smeared with dried blood, he picked up a boy who had just lost both legs. The boy, mercifully, was unconscious. At another spot, he helped carry a woman who was gasping for breath. She had a hole in her neck, which kept spurting blood like a fitful faucet. He does not know if she lived. At another spot, he helped a man up who was screaming in pain. Part of his head had been ripped off, his skull peeping out from under hair soaked in red. He must have been in a state of panic, the man said, thinking he was about to die.

It is a scene that might have come straight from a war, and it probably does, a war that has just been surreptitiously declared. It partakes of the ferocity of one. Doubly so, descending as it has on what should have been the happiest of days, the culmination of the Christmas season. This was almost the eve of the new year, or the new millennium in the reckoning of scientists, and men, women, and children were scurrying about to shop for their favorite merrymakers or to squeeze out what remained of the holidays. When suddenly the lights blazed and the darkness fell. In one instant, the haze of joy and bonhomie turned into the pall of pain and death.

Joseph Estrada is on the television looking at the world with a fierce brow. He is reading a script. He wants to assure the public, he says, that his administration will not countenance such barbaric acts. He is right about one thing. This is a barbaric act. No, more than that, it is a monstrous act. It is an act that ranks up there in cowardliness with the shooting of Jose Crisologo while he knelt on the pew to receive Holy Communion. It is an act that ranks up there in cold-bloodedness with the bombing of Plaza Miranda. It is an act that ranks up there in obscenity with the massacre of the children in war.

Who could have done such a monstrous act?

It is axiomatic in solving any crime to ask three questions. Who has the means? Who has the opportunity? Who has the motive?

Who has the means to bomb five places in Metro Manila?

Brig. Gen. Jaime Canatoy is on TV, and he says the NPA does. They know for a fact, he says, that the NPA has been training its people how to bomb installations.

Maybe. But the bombs that killed 14 (as of last count) and wounded a couple of dozen others are not the crude homemade kind but cost a pretty penny. I wonder if Canatoy can explain why the NPA, which counts bullets in offensives that bring tangible gains should wish to squander scant resources in offensives that bring only tangible losses.

Then I remember that Alexander Aguirre, Panfilo Lacson, Angelo Reyes, the security, PNP and AFP chiefs respectively were on TV only a couple of months ago warning lawless elements against plying their dark trade on their turf. I think it curious that the lawless elements should live up to their warnings just when their boss is near to being found guilty of lawlessness by the Senate. Briefly, I entertain the thought that they are blessed with prescience. I dismiss it.

Who has the opportunity to bomb five places in Metro Manila?

Defense chief—what "defense" means only he can say now—Orly Mercado is on TV too, and he says as yet unnamed terrorists do. A terrorist has the advantage of surprise. When he will attack depends solely on him. That gives him opportunity.

Maybe. The Abu Sayyaf and the ABB have been known to do seemingly impossible things through sheer brazenness. They might conceivably sneak up inside a bus or a cargo hold of the Naia or Plaza Ferguson or the LRT or a gasoline station in Makati and plant a bomb there without being detected. But I wonder too if Mercado can explain how they were able to do that in five places all at once. Despite Lacson's boasts he has the city sewn up a mouse couldn't squeak through.

Then I remember something an NPA told me some years ago when I was doing the book on martial law. "Sure, we bombed some places too, but always to make a political statement. And never places where the *masa* could get hurt or killed. What would we gain by that? There was no point in discrediting Marcos, he was already discredited. The bombings that happened before Marcos declared martial law, he did those."

Who gains most from bombing five places in Metro Manila, and at this particular time?

Joseph Estrada is on the TV again. His brow has gotten fiercer and he reads his script with more emotion. It is not easy to detect conviction. He has never been a very good actor—Nick Joaquin once said he excelled in the knitted-brow school of acting. He has the profile of the criminal down pat. This barbaric act, he says, could only have been done by someone who was *duwag at desperado*, cowardly and desperate. It could only have been done by someone who was intent on pushing an agenda at all cost, no matter who got hurt, no matter who got killed.

Images of the carnage flash through the television screen again. A body lies still among the wreckage in a train coach in Blumentritt. Someone says the parts of bodies that had been blown away looked just like pieces of broken dolls—except for the blood. The blood rushes to my head. For the first time I agree completely with the President of the Philippines. Only a cowardly and desperate person could have done this. Only someone who has nothing but contempt for the masses, who would knife them in the back while they looked up to heaven flushed with hope and rejoicing, could do this. Only someone who has nothing but scorn for life, who did not particularly care whether others lived or died so long as he thrived and prospered, could do this. Only someone who craves power so badly, a purpose that has become so inflexible, so unyielding, so contrary to reason it may now be pursued only at the cost of everything humanity holds dear, could do this.

The lights in my Christmas tree glow fiercely but give no cheer. There will be no happy new year for this country until that someone is brought to the dock, and punished.

* * *

Comments are welcome at dequiros@avasia.com

Theories

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

THERE are all sorts of theories about the perpetrators of the multiple blasts that rocked Metro Manila last Dec. 30, but there is one question that ought to be kept in mind: who has the capability to launch such simultaneous and obviously well-coordinated bomb attacks, which need expertise, a rather elaborate organization and the necessary trained personnel as well as radios, vehicles and other paraphernalia?

* * *

So, who did it? Satur Ocampo, former National Democratic Front chief, told a press conference last Saturday that the Left had nothing to gain from launching such attacks and that they were not in the "style" of the New People's Army in that the NPA attacks government installations but not civilians.

On the other hand, could it be the handiwork of the Abu Sayyaf? This angle is being eyed especially after Hector Janjalani, the brother of the terroristic group's founder, Abubakar Janjalani, was nabbed in the Quiapo Muslim community by the Special Action Force of the PNP. One question is, why should the Abu Sayyaf choose to launch the attacks now, when it has all the funds garnered from those kidnappings of months back? One would think the Abu Sayyaf would be enjoying its money on holidays abroad. Besides, its force in Manila is very small.

As for the MILF, if it failed to launch such near-simultaneous attacks at the height of its conflict with the government months ago, why now when things have quieted down for this Mindanao dissident group? Why get into the hot seat once more when its more urgent move should be consolidation ?

* * *

If a poll were taken in Metro Manila on who caused those bombings, the most popular theory that would doubtless emerge is that the bomb attacks stand to benefit those people who have everything to lose in the resumption of the impeachment trials tomorrow. Over the holidays the people's entire attention was focused on the trials and everyone, it seemed, was looking forward to the resumption of the testimony of Clarissa Ocampo and other vital prosecution witnesses, all of which look bad for the defense. Moreover, the resumed trial is expected to pick up steam as both the House prosecutors and the Senate judges push for a quick resolution, in view of the coming campaign and elections.

There is a pet theory in the opposition that the bombings could have been meant to divert attention and focus from the trial and even derail the proceedings that appear to bring the President to certain conviction. If this is true, what a dastardly way to divert attention, with so many people dead and wounded!

* * *

Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. is now under pressure from various quarters, including the prosecutors, some senators, private lawyers and the media, such as columnist Joaquin Bernas, to clarify his startling position last Dec. 22 that the burden of proving that the P500 million being made out by President Estrada, under the name of Jose Velarde, to Wellex Corp. is ill-gotten. This was the defense's line of reasoning since the beginning, but now it cites Davide's ruling to reinforce its position.

Lawyer and former Solicitor General Frank Chavez points out, however, that the prosecutors can easily prove that the P500 million Wellex fund and the P1.2 billion in the savings account of "Jose Velarde" in Equitable PCI Bank are ill-gotten based on three documents. These are, the President's income tax returns over three years, his statement of assets and liabilities over this period and a judicial notice from the Office of the President of his three years' salary, at P50,000 a month.

* * *

The impeachment trial has provided the opposition a mighty catchword for the campaign in "Jose Velarde." I saw this for myself in Pangasinan last Dec. 26, during the celebrations held in honor of former Speaker Joe de Venecia's birthday. Oppositionists Heherson Alvarez, Obet Pagdanganan and Liway Chato would mention this name and the people would immediately yell back, "Estrada." What could conceivably happen is that the oppositionists would be attacking Jose Velarde, not Estrada, and still deliver their message. Another word that connotes a powerful message is "mansions."

The way things are going, it would be awfully difficult for the senatorial and other candidates of the President's coalition party to squeeze through the elections, given the damage Jose Velarde and those mansions would do.

* * *

At Mangaldan, Pangasinan, where Vice President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo caught up with the birthday celebration of De Venecia, she paid tribute to a white-haired elderly man on the stage whom she referred to as "my foster-father." He was Don Pedró Balingit who was a classmate of her father, President Diosdado Macapagal, in the Pampanga High School in San Fernando, Pampanga, but who made his fortune in Pangasinan. I learned later that Balingit became rich from setting up pharmaceutical outlets in Pangasinan, and later branching out to real estate. Macapagal said that Balingit, still spry at 92, is living testimony of the strength of the middle-class in Pangasinan, that has made the province very progressive.

* * *

Defense Assistant Secretary for Plans and Programs Ruben Carranza recently resigned in protest of allegations of ill-gotten wealth against the President, saying he could no longer serve him. Earlier, Interior Undersecretary and former human rights lawyer Alex Padilla, son of the late Sen. Ambrosio Padilla, also resigned for the same reasons. The resignation of Carranza, who is a UP trained lawyer, who placed within the top 10 in the bar examinations, will hurt Defense Chief Orly Mercado as they had been very close over the years. Carranza served as his resident ideologue in the DND and the post he held may be considered the heart and soul of the defense establishment. Carranza definitely is not a minor functionary who "can easily be replaced," as Estrada has said in trying to minimize the impact of the DND official's resignation.

* * *

A resignation that's now expected is that of Economic Planning Secretary Felipe Medalla, following certain pronouncements he had made. I had heard as early as last September that he wanted to quit the Cabinet and return to the academe, due to his frustrations over the way the country was being run. After the Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson exposé Medalla was expected to quit, especially since he was under tremendous pressure from the UP community but a resignation didn't materialize.

But lately Medalla was quoted as saying it's "deep-thinking time" for him. He opined that if President Estrada were to be acquitted, there was "no clear picture of how he can effectively govern and that's not an easy scenario to deal with." The Neda chief said that even if the allegations of corruption were proved untrue, "enough people believe it's true" and he cited in particular the local business community as well as the international community. This is what the senators have to realize: there is no way for Estrada to regain that confidence even if he is acquitted. The senators ought to listen to him.

'Duwag at desperado'

LETTER FROM MINDANAO

Carolyn O. Arguillas

A CATHOLIC priest surnamed Inocencio gunned down on Holy Innocents' Day—Dec. 28—in Jolo, Sulu by suspected Abu Sayyaf gunmen, one of whom was gunned down by pursuing soldiers.

The assassination of Fr. Benjamin "Benjie" Inocencio, 42, landed on Page 1 of national newspapers the next day but not enough to grab the headline away from the President on trial.

Also on Dec. 28, on the same day that Father Inocencio was killed in Jolo, Chief Supt. Romulo Sales, PNP intelligence chief, presented to the media in Manila Alsheed Alling Albani, reportedly a member of the "central committee" and Hector Janjalani, brother of slain Abu Sayyaf founder Abubakar Abdurajak and Khadaffy, the leader who took over.

"Their arrest," said Sales, "preempted a hideous terror plot to be carried out in the metropolis at the height of the Christmas season."

On Dec. 29, newspapers reported the claim of the police that they had foiled a planned bombing spree by the Abu Sayyaf in Metro Manila. (Sales might have added to that, "now you can sleep in heavenly peace.")

But just when the country was supposed to have been assured a bombing spree had been foiled, the next day, Dec. 30, five bombs went off, killing at least 14 persons and wounding nearly a hundred in Metro Manila. Whodunit?

Can Sales say the Abu Sayyaf did it when he had just said two days earlier that the alleged planned bombing spree had been foiled?

The "*duwag at desperado*" whose only aim is to advance whatever their "political agenda" is, "*kahit na manganib ang buhay ng kanilang kapwa*" were the culprits, the President with so many names said.

Who are the "*duwag at desperado*?" The Abu Sayyaf? The Moro Islamic Liberation Front? The New People's Army? Can any of these groups be classified as "*duwag at desperado*" these days?

Can the political opposition be classified as "*duwag at desperado*" when the testimony of Clarissa Ocampo that Mr. Estrada is Jose Velarde and the coming out of more witnesses—a more lethal explosive?

Isn't "*duwag at desperado*" more applicable to people who have become so desperate to stay in power they would do all cowardly things like killing innocent people? Interviewed by ANC (ABS-CBN News Channel) on Saturday afternoon, Manila Mayor Lito Atienza said initial investigation showed the explosive used in the LRT bombing was a dynamite, apparently detonated using a timing device. Now who has dynamites? Who has the capability to mount that obviously very costly operation? Whodunit?

I cannot say with certainty but one thing is certain: that bombing spree grabbed the headlines away from the other "explosives"—the damning pieces of evidence related to the trial of the beleaguered chief of state.

Would the President declare a state of emergency? Martial law? Would he risk doing a very unpopular move that would be viewed by the public as preventing the resumption of his trial tomorrow? Maybe not.

Perhaps the intent of the perpetrators of Saturday's bombings was to scare people from taking to the streets for mass actions against Mr. Estrada tomorrow and the days thereafter. But would the people be scared?

* * *

Friday, Dec. 29, Cagayan de Oro City: "*Mahal na mahal ko ang* Mindanao. *Mahal ko rin ang mga* Muslim," Mr. Estrada said. Hohum…

Some way of showing one's love, though, to the 856 alleged MILF surrenderers who were formally presented to him in Camp Evangelista. Shades of the feast at Camp Abubakar in early July: *lechon* (roasted pig) was again served during lunch, prompting a number of MILF returnees to leave the dining hall not with a plate of food but with only a bottle of mineral water. Most of them, according to the Inquirer's Froilan Gallardo, had lunch at the nearby Army barracks where they cooked their own food. But that's not the end to it.

Mr. Estrada gave bags of goodies to the returnees, the plastic bags carrying his photograph on both sides. "*Sus, ang mahal nito*," a Cagayan de Oro trader commented when he saw an Inquirer photo of an MILF commander with his bag of presents from Estrada. The trader said the color images of Estrada would cost millions of pesos to print on the plastic bags. What were inside those bags?

Fortunately for Mr. Estrada, an alert and yes, sensitive presidential staff member saw an objectionable item among the goodies inside those bags—a can of Ma-ling pork luncheon meat—and ordered them removed before the bags could be given to the alleged surrenderers.

* * *

An ANC reporter phoning in a story from Makati on the suspicious-looking package (of what turned out to be mangoes) left in ShoeMart, explained they were made to stay meters away from the package, etc., that they weren't allowed to go near the package owner whom they wanted to interview, etc.

What struck me was her having said they wanted to ask the package owner "if he were a Muslim." As insensitive as giving a can of Ma-ling pork luncheon meat to Muslims.

* * *

Bishop Benjamin de Jesus, 4 February 1997. Fr. Benjamin Inocencio, 28 December 2000. Gunned down around the same time of the morning—a little past 10—near the cathedral.

From the Peace Advocates Zamboanga (PAZ), this statement: "Made even more significant by his being a religious leader, Father Inocencio's death brings to memory the slaying of his namesake, Bishop Ben de Jesus, OMI, almost three years ago in the same place. The example they have prövided in placing their lives in unselfish dedication to God and to His people shall be a constant source of inspiration. Yet their martyrdom bespeaks the malevolent realities of animosity that are risked even by persons of goodwill who pave the way to reconciliation and harmony. As this violence happens amid our celebration of Christmas and Harirava Eid'l Fitr, the life-giving essence of both seasons invites us all to unite and reach out to one another in the spirit of reconciliation and solidarity. It motivates us to renew our commitment to walk in understanding and compassion, putting in place the building blocks of peace. By his death, Fr. Benjamin Inocencio, OMI—martyr—challenges us all to strengthen our resolve to work for peace by ways of peace, grounded on justice, imbued with truth and freedom, enlivened by love and strengthened by solidarity. We can do no less."

Millennium: God is subtle, not malicious

COMMENTARY

Dean Jorge Bocobo

TODAY, 01/01/01, or Jan. 1, 2001 A.D., is a good time to tackle a topic of endless confusion and fascination to many. I refer to the reckoning of dates in the Christian calendar, in which today is the first day, of the first month, of the first year, of the first century, of the third set of a thousand years. Yesterday, Dec. 31, 2000, was the last day, of the last month, of the last year, of the last century, of the second millennium of the Christian era. So, in fact, it is only today, exactly after midnight last night, (and most definitely not a year ago), that we entered into the third millennium of the Christian era.

We say "the Christian era" because the 2,000 years until midnight last night began with the year that Jesus Christ is customarily taken to have been born, that is, 0001 A.D. (A.D. stands for "Anno Domini" or "the year of our Lord"). Now, as a recent letter to the editor correctly pointed out, it is not known for sure when the historical person of Jesus Christ was actually born. But this is really not needed for the formal operation and understanding of that calendar. It is simply custom or tradition, and not history, by which we take the year 0001 A.D. as the year in which Jesus Christ was born and the Christian era begins.

Uncertain of His real birth date, it is only logical that 0001 A.D. be set as the year of Christ's birth. Some other arbitrary choice would be embarrassing. For example, if we chose the year immediately prior to 0001 A.D., which is the year 0001 B.C. ("Before Christ"), then we would find ourselves in the awkward position of saying that He was born before the Christian era started. Likewise, 0002 A.D. would be a bad choice, for then the Christian era starts before Christ was born.

Next, tradition sets the birth date of Jesus at Dec. 25, 0001 A.D., the first Christmas. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, according to Catholic belief, sometime in March of that same year. Last Christmas Eve, as is tradition in my family, we attended Midnight Mass. During the sermon, our parish priest said we are celebrating the 2,000th birthday of Jesus. I winced at this because, in my humble opinion, last Dec. 25 was only His 1,999th birthday. He would not be celebrating his 2,000th birthday until Dec. 25, 2001. Since he was "born," according to the calendar convention, on Dec. 25, 0001, He was a one year old toddler on Dec. 25, 0002 A.D. So if you work out His age today, you might find yourself agreeing with me. The same conclusion is reached whichever day of the year 0001 A.D. you choose as His birthday. It's really a trivial point, but one that cannot be conceded, no more than "one plus one equals three."

Still, it would be nice to fix Christ's birth in history. Unlike history, astronomy can be a more accurate method of dating events. Since Isaac Newton, scientists have been able to calculate things like solar eclipses and comet arrivals, both past and future, to an accuracy of milliseconds. When we need even more accuracy, there is the 20th century science of Einstein's relativity. But so far, 17th century Newton has been far more than good enough for time-sensitive things like launching satellites and going to the moon or Mars, (though not the far stars).

I wish that something like the Star of Bethlehem could be an astronomical means of fixing when Christ was actually born. In articles for Inquirer's Lifestyle section, I once reviewed some theories of what the Star of Bethlehem was. It could have been a supernova, a titanic stellar explosion in which a star shines for a short while with the light of a hundred million to several billion suns, then implodes into a gravitational beast called a black hole. Chinese astronomers witnessed a supernova on July 4, 1054 A.D., still visible as the Crab Nebula. A modern one was seen in 1987 in the Large Magellanic Clouds, with a storm of theoretically predicted neutrino particles detected shortly after sighting. The other possibilities were comets like Halley's, or planetary conjunctions seen by the "Three Kings," if they were observant astrologers as some claim. But none of these have worked convincingly, so astronomy has failed too.

The aforementioned letter writer also suggested the Big Bang as the start of our calendar. But with a best-estimate occurrence of about 15 billion years ago, (based on the observed expansion rate of the visible universe of galaxies), that would make this our 15 millionth millennium. Most unwieldy. Unless you want to call it our 15th "billennium," but that would only create new confusion.

Of course, the birth of Christ and the beginning of a new millennium hold far greater spiritual meaning than this essay might suggest. I revere the profound joy and ponderous importance with which we greet these events. But I believe it is our attitude toward the great unknowns that matters most. As a physicist, I take the call of Christ "to come and follow Me," as an invitation to bravely explore the universe's vast mysteries, not with blind faith, but with all the sense and intelligence endowed in us. My favorite saint is Thomas the Doubter, in whom skepticism was raised to saintly virtue.

For me, dogmatism is the human failure to accept God's challenge to understand His creation, if that is what everything is. Science is the greatest art and the highest expression of humanity. I reject the cowardice of dogmatism in religions which claim to be infallible and supreme. I hew to Albert Einstein's belief that "God is subtle, but not malicious." His laws may be complex, but they can be discovered and unraveled. He has no need for miracles which break those laws, nor do we. We must place our hope in the light of knowledge and exploration, rather than in the dark of ignorance and dogma. As for morality, let every man's conscience be his guiding star.

* * *

This Inquirer contributor wishes all a Happy New Millennium. My e-mail is deanbocobo@hotmail.com

Looking back

IT'S been eight months since this column started. On April 17, 2000, the Inquirer pioneered (as far as the newspaper industry in the Philippines is concerned) the idea coming out with a column that will regularly address the concerns of readers about the treatment or handling of news and photos.

Going through the heap of letters and e-mail messages I received last year, it seems the principal concern of the readers had been fair and balanced treatment of events and personalities.

The readers want to hear both sides of the issues. Although most letter writers seem to have made up their minds on the subject of the news or photos, they nonetheless want to know the other side's position on the matter.

READERS' ADVOCATE

Raul J. Palabrica

It is not enough that the Inquirer publishes the other side of the story elsewhere in the body of the news. These readers want the "counter-argument," whether oppositionist or pro-administration, to be given equal treatment in terms of page exposure or prominence. And, most importantly, in the same issue or, if that is not feasible, immediately after the day one side was published.

Some readers happen to have a different concept of fairness. For them, fairness means giving prominent treatment to whatever side of an issue they believe in, with little regard for the opinion of the opposite side. Every time the Inquirer came up with headlines or news that, in their view, gave their "opponent" favorable publicity, they were quick to write in protest.

When the newspaper last May gave front-page treatment to news and photos about the government's campaign against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, readers with ties to non-governmental organizations or sympathetic to the independence aspirations of the Muslims raised a howl about what they called "militaristic tendencies" of the Inquirer. They complained of preferential treatment of the military.

Balance

Days later, after the newspaper published photos of a mosque inside Camp Bushra that was damaged in the course of the government troops' assault of the MILF stronghold, it was the turn of the pro-military readers to chastise the Inquirer for its "pro-MILF bias." They felt the newspaper, wittingly or unwittingly, engendered public sympathy for the Muslim rebels at the expense of the military.

It was the same story for the handling of the news about demands for President Estrada to resign shortly after Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson revealed the President's alleged involvement in *jueteng*.

The pro-Erap readers took the Inquirer to task for giving prominent treatment to the mass actions held at Makati City and elsewhere that called on the President to step down from office. These readers felt the newspaper showed its anti-Erap posture with the dramatic pictures that accompanied the news.

Not to be outdone, the anti-Erap readers protested when the Inquirer accorded front-page treatment to the photo of the one million or so El Shaddai and Iglesia ni Cristo members who gathered at the Quirino Grandstand to observe a day of prayer. The administration's propagandists described the gathering as a show of support for the embattled President. So to the anti-Erap readers, the prominent spot given by the newspaper to the event was proof that it was pro-Erap.

In the two instances mentioned, I informed the readers concerned that the newspaper is neither anti-Erap nor pro-Erap. It reports the news as they happen, regardless of who benefits or is adversely affected in the process.

Corrections

Next to balanced treatment, grammar, spelling and choice of words were the concern of the readers. Hardly a week passed without a reader calling attention to misspellings, poor sentence construction, mistakes in the use of verbs and adverbs and inaccurate words.

These "volunteer proofreaders" were able to detect minor or innocuous errors in the middle of the text of the news. Even the advertisements did not escape their review. Some of these readers even gave short lectures on the correct way to use certain words and phrases. They reminded me of my stern but efficient English I professor during my freshman college days.

Although sometimes embarrassing, these grammatical boo-boos have become opportunities to spur improvements in proofreading. On several occasions, the errors pointed out by the readers led to a review of existing editorial policies on grammar and new approaches in the preparation of the news.

However, there had been a few turn-offs in this kind of letters. These are the ones sent by readers with the "gotcha" attitude. They expect the Inquirer to be perfect or error-free in its news and features. There is no room for mistakes. Any error, no matter how small, is reason enough for them to severely criticize the newspaper for inept and reckless handling of the news. "You committed a mistake and I caught you!" is their familiar refrain.

An acknowledgement of the mistake by way of a letter will not suffice. They want (or better still, demand) that the Inquirer make a public apology about the error in this column and promise not to commit the same error again!

I sometimes get the impression that the reason these readers make a line-by-line review of the newspaper for grammatical mistakes and insist on an act of contrition from the newspaper is to see their names in print.

Role

The role of the readers' advocate in attending to complaints from readers was the subject of several letters last year. Some readers held the view that the readers' advocate should, as the name denotes, support and defend the cause of the reader regardless of the merit of the complaint.

In other words, whether the complaint is meritorious or baseless is not for the readers' advocate to determine. He is obliged to take the cudgels for the reader in the editorial room and see to it that the relief demanded by the reader is granted by the editors or management.

For these readers, the readers' advocate betrays the readers when he upholds the side of the editorial staff or justifies an action taken by the newspaper on a complaint.

I explained to the readers concerned that the readers' advocate is not meant to be the inquisitor or persecutor of the editorial staff. When a reader's complaint is meritorious, I will push for the acknowledgment of whatever mistakes may have been committed and adoption of corrective measures to prevent a repeat of the complained error.

On the other hand, if the complaint is baseless or whimsical, it is only fair that I take the side of the editorial staff and explain to the reader why the action sought from the newspaper cannot be granted.

No doubt, the readers who took time to write to me about their concerns and observations, except for a handful, were motivated by good intentions. But there were some who were obviously part of letter-writing brigades, or groups of people who wrote at the instance of public relations practitioners to criticize or support certain personalities on current issues.

These professional letter writers were quick to complain and demand disciplinary action on the reporter concerned if their clients were put in a bad light by published news. Or cry "bias" when the press releases of their clients do not see print on the date and page they want.

Every time an article is critical of a prominent personality, whether in the government or the social circle, complaints of unfair treatment from readers who disclaim any relation with that personality almost always reach my desk.

It is a tribute to the sense of decency of the readers who did not get their way in their complaints that they came back to write me to accept my explanation on why the relief they asked for was not favorably acted upon by the editorial staff or management.

By and large, the year just past was fruitful and fulfilling to this column.

Happy 2001 to everyone.

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The readers' advocate may be reached at the following address: "The Readers' Advocate" c/o Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, Makati City. Or through fax nos. 897-4793 to 94, or readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph.

Quote of the year

PROSECUTOR Joker Arroyo, in his inimitable bluntness, said these words in the opening statement for the prosecution: "President Joseph Estrada, except for his name, violated every word in his oath of office."

However, the testimony of banker Clarissa Ocampo showed that the President violated even his name when he opened a fictitious account with the Equitable PCI Bank under the name of Jose Velarde. This just shows the utter hopelessness of this administration.

I credit Arroyo for perspicacity.

For me, this is the quote of the year.—**TOMAS C. VARGAS, Tandang Sora, Quezon City**

Lady of integrity

CLARISSA Ocampo has been my superior in the Equitable PCI Bank's trust division for the past six years. How she performed as a surprise witness in the impeachment trial was typical of her for she is brave, forthright, truthful, uncompromising in the name of justice. It is second nature for her to be intelligent, collected, poised and highly professional.

The Filipino people should salute this lady of integrity. She knows it is a life-threatening act to appear and bring out the truth about the decadence of President Estrada. I am proud to say that Ocampo has earned a sure place in the history of the impeachment trial of President Estrada with her courageous testimony on who the real Jose Velarde is.

We should inspire Ocampo more in her next testimony. Let us pray that with the help of God, she will play the greatest performance of her life and help liberate the Filipinos from the claws of an unworthy leader.

Clarissa Ocampo is a living example of the probity of the Equitable PCI Bank as an institution. Let us pray for her and her family. Let us serve as her security guards for the sake of justice and truth.—**BONA B. JALANDONI, Equitable PCI Bank Tower 1, Makati City**

Lipstick on her chest

I APPEAL to the owners of Bench to immediately remove the company's billboards situated along Quirino Avenue and at the end of the South Superhighway showing a very popular actress-singer in a seductive pose. My appeal is prompted by the innocent observation and question posed the other day by my 4-year-old son as we approached the larger-than-life advertisement. "Dad, I thought lipsticks were for the lips. Why is the lipstick on her chest?"

The advertisements of Bench products, to my recollection, have been clean and wholesome. These billboards totally deviate, in form and substance, from the clean and wholesome image associated with the company and its products.

Bench, I believe, is doing well enough to afford not to embrace the "sex sells" formula of the advertising industry.—**SABINO JOSE M. PADILLA III, 232 Juan Luna St., Binondo, Manila**

Will PNP arrest biggest 'kotong'?

THE COUNTRY applauded when PNP Director General Panfilo "Ping" Lacson went after the *kotong* cops and sent erring police officers and men into what he calls "ICU." These efforts gained *pogi* points not only for Lacson but also for the entire police force.

Now the nation is wondering if the Philippine National Police chief will go after the biggest *kotong* of all, his commander in chief. What is he going to do to be consistent with his promise to go after anyone who violates the law regardless of his position?—**TONY P. REDONDO, 319 A. Aguirre Ave., BF Homes, Parañaque City**

A proud country falling apart

TAKE an unabashed fornicator, an unrepentant souse and an unreconstructed high-roller, whose discourse traverses the short distance between *kenkoy* and *kanto* (sadly, you can take the man out of show biz, but you can't take show biz out of the man; worse, you can take the goon out of the gutter, but you can't take the gutter out of the goon). Put him in the loftiest, most powerful seat in the land, and what have you got?

A country, once proud, still proud, but falling apart. A country whose Gold Standard this hollow man has successfully reduced to Three Ws: wine, women and *weteng*.

People are still asking what can finally exorcise our country of this curse: resignation, impeachment, snap elections, a military takeover, self-exile, power-sharing, referendum. There may be others: a nonperforming prostate, a failed liver, a bloated bladder, or—who knows?—even an act of God. (The Japanese, by the way, have an efficient and effective option.) But the bottom line is, Estrada must go. Go soon, go quickly, go quietly, go permanently and indefinitely. Resign.

Meanwhile, the sleepwalker in Malacañang continues to miss the point. What a waste of eloquence, analysis, irony, innuendo and "urbane prose" from the free and responsible media and other honorable sectors of society. *Wa epek*. Even frontal insults from a public that has lost all respect (*binababoy na siya*) have bounced off this pachyderm.

Not even 15 minutes of virtual respectability in a buttoned-up *barong*, in front of the presidential seal, proclaiming, "I will not resign!"—with the help of a prompter, of course—could reinvent the man.

Meanwhile, his shrinking circle of power is using every fallacy in a college freshman's textbook to prevent their world from caving in: squid tactics, the red herring, *tu quoque* ("you too"), *ad misericordiam*, *ad hominem*, you name it. *Iwas pusoy*. Pathetic.

They have even added *ad baculum*. Just look at the muscle-flexing on national television by those zombies in uniform, representing two of the most corrupt, most fascistic, most sadistic institutions in the country, their leaders warning, "We will uphold the Constitution." *Nakakasuka*! Not exactly known for finesse, they made sure the people did not miss the crude and insulting juxtaposition. (Wow, *direk, parang* "Men in Black"!)

Unfortunately for them, however, it's the Big Black Wolf who's running scared. So scared he must have peed in his pants that night while trying to give the cameras his best *pa*-macho shot.

Meanwhile, he continues to play the old shell game by handing out "titles" to the landless, little realizing that he is playing with fire. Reports are rife that Mickey Mouse titles are now in circulation. Watch the explosion when he finally runs out—as he is now running out—of land.

Meanwhile, the people's task is to keep the issue in focus. Estrada is the problem; the problem is Estrada. And don't anyone tell us otherwise.

Meanwhile, the people must make sure that pressure for El Problemo to resign continues to mount. Timing and pacing are everything. The temperature must be kept at fever pitch, without its prematurely erupting into a convulsion or slipping into a cold sweat. We will have to guard against protest-fatigue.

Meanwhile, we must keep vigil to speed up the impeachment process. Pressure must come from many fronts. We must set up people's congresses in strategic points all over the country to conduct parallel trials. Schools, colleges and universities with intrepid students and faculty, and under intrepid officials, should take the first step and serve as initial fora. Then the rest of the country must prepare for the groundswell.

Meanwhile, each of us should start drawing up our own blacklist. Mine starts with the members of the Cabinet who are aspiring for elective office, from Ed Angara to Ronnie Zamora. By hanging on to their sinecures, they, as well as similarly situated officials, have demonstrated how willing they are to become accessories to a national crime just to satisfy overweening ambition.

Nor have I left out Alfredo Lim, Alexander Aguirre, Angelo Reyes, Panfilo Lacson, and other government hangmen, past and present. Or Dong Puno (still alive?).

I then move on to members of the Senate: Osmeña (John the Pukable; not Serge); Coseteng (The Big Disappointment, despite her fastbreak in the last two minutes), Defensor-Santiago (Technicolor Popcorn Machine—cheap), Tatad (The Black Pope), and Aquino-Oreta (The Black Sheep).

And how can I possibly leave out Juan Ponce Enrile, the Philippines' own Evil Knevel (*sic*)? Or Blas Ople (of peOple, by peOple, and always for peOple)? Or Honasan and Sotto, who are in various stages of stupor? We are told that the best cure for this type of asphyxia comes in fat brown envelopes.

From the House, the list should be long, starting from Rep. Ding-a-ling down to the last subliterate member, certified drug-user and wife-beater. Let's start with our own congressmen. Breathe down their necks; watch their every move; take note of their every plot, scheme and ploy; etch their names in stone; flood them with mails.

Media—those that have not sold out, that is—can do the people a tremendous service by providing space for a daily scoreboard of their votes, even without comment. The people are capable of arriving at the right conclusions. Television shows should display the names of those who speak or stick their faces into the cameras, the better to remember them on judgment day.

Meanwhile, keep a deathwatch on the stream of vermin that make their daily pilgrimage to Fort Knox-upon-The Pasig. These would naturally include your local government officials, from governor to mayor to *kagawad*—every single one of these arm-linking, bootlicking, bribe-taking, beer-bellied slugs. Keep a steady eye on their pockets as they drool all the way to the bank.

Then scrape the scum off the sewer. Annihilate all anti-impeachment, pro-Estrada forces at the polls—not only in the next elections, but in every election they ever join for the rest of their lives. Spit in their faces. Let them know it's now the people's turn to shout, "*Hoy, Joseph! Huwag mo kaming subukan*!"

I would like to end by joining those who call on our colleagues in the University of the Philippines and our fellow alumni now perched in government positions to stop propping up a strawman. We assume you started out with the best of intentions. But it is time to stop kidding yourselves. Stop thinking that you can save the nation by saving this man who refuses to be saved. This man is unreachable, impervious, ossified. Worse, he is incapable of humility, self-reproach and remorse—unless we count sticking his tongue out at Sonny Ramirez, OPM, on national TV as an act of contrition.

Forget the perks that come with power and pelf. Return to the fold of academe, where genteel and honorable poverty has never been a cause for embarrassment. Help rescue our country from certain ruin.—**M.K. GUZMAN, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City**

Filipino women back with a vengeance

NOTHING can be more destructive to President Estrada than the women who testified against him. Suddenly the President is besieged by intelligent and attractive women whose testimony can bring his downfall. This seems ironic for they also can help redeem the tarnished image of Filipina womanhood that was cheapened as mere sex objects by him. Like women scorned, they came with a vengeance.

A grateful nation stood in awe when these women showed exceptional courage and patriotism at the impeachment trial and testified against the President in total disregard of their safety.

To all of them go our grateful appreciation. We offer our prayers that they may be kept out of harm's way. We are proud of them for helping us wipe away the disgrace and shame President Estrada has brought on the nation.

The antics of some senator-judges in the impeachment court have become intolerable. Clearly, their biases are not in support of truth, but rather in support of suppressing it. We find unacceptable that every legal technicality is being raised to prevent the witness from testifying. We, the people, only want the truth and nothing more.

The irreparable damage done by the testimony of the witnesses to President Estrada does not guarantee an absolute victory for the prosecution. Neither will a preponderance of damaging evidence and credible witnesses give an assurance of victory if those sitting in judgment are bereft of a clear conscience and a fair sense of what is right and wrong. But their measure has been taken. They are identified and we shall keep our eyes on them.—**CESAR M. DE LOS REYES, 45 Fordham St., White Plains, Quezon City**

The meaning of Christmas

I WAS truly touched by your editorial last Dec. 24, titled "Peerless celebration."

I am now in New York taking my doctoral studies at Columbia University. Although, I have been here for almost three years, I always made it a point to go home and celebrate Christmas with my family and friends. I would book my ticket as early as June just to be able to come home on Christmas.

Unfortunately, because of the controversial air dispute with Taiwan early this year, airlines in the United States refused to accept reservations. They were apparently hoping that because of the controversy airfares would shoot through the roof.

I was teary eyed when I read your editorial. It truly captured what Christmas means for all of us Filipinos and why it is such an important celebration for us. With the impeachment process going on and the economy in a shambles, I can only pray and hope that this Christmas—in spite of the fact that most Filipinos are deprived of the amenities the season brings—we can still say, "Thank you, Lord for everything that has been, that is and that will be."

Mabuhay ang Pilipino!—**JOSE MARI B. LEGASPI, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York**

A gift fit for presidents and kings

COMMENTARY

Maria Socorro G. Naguit

PRESIDENT Estrada has lamented that the charges hurled against him are hurting his family. As for his mother, she is said to have long rued his ways.

The President's family may not realize it, but they possess a gift that nobody wants but which everyone needs. Public officials, in particular, should be required to show proof of having this gift. If it were within my power to give it, I'd make sure the incumbent President—and all our presidents from hereon—receives it.

That gift is pain. More accurately, the capacity to feel it.

The remarkable book, "The Gift of Pain," by Dr. Paul Brand and Philip Yancey, tells of the good that comes from pain.

"The Gift of Pain" begins with the story of Tanya, a child who suffered from a rare genetic defect known as "congenital indifference to pain." Tanya, in plainer words, did not feel pain. Until Dr. Brand had diagnosed Tanya's rare defect, her parents had thought they had "begotten a monster." The reason was that from the time she was 17 months old, she began biting her own fingers till they bled. She did that by way of "play" since doing so didn't hurt a bit, only gave her the use of her own blood to "paint" with.

Dr. Brand writes: "Tanya's particular problem occurs rarely, but such conditions as leprosy, diabetes, alcoholism, multiple sclerosis, nerve disorders and spinal cord injury can also bring about the **strangely hazardous state of insensitivity to pain** [emphasis mine].

Ironically, while most of us seek out pharmacists and doctors in search of relief from pain, these people live in constant peril due to pain's *absence*.

Pain, after all, is a signal of injury. People who cannot feel it are deprived of an important signal to seek healing for an injured part.

Thus far we have been talking of physical pain, on which Dr. Brand and Yancey focus (although they mention emotional and mental suffering in passing). Their book has sent me thinking, however, of a fourth kind of pain. I speak of moral pain.

We have all—most of us, anyway—felt this kind of pain now and again. We know it, too, quite appropriately, as "pangs of conscience" or "pangs of guilt."

Imagine what harm can come to someone unable to feel this kind of pain. Indeed, imagine what harm can come to those people whose lives he affects by his actions (or acts of omission). One who feels no guilt from lying will lie again and again. In so doing, he frays the bond of trust between him and those to whom he lies repeatedly. The same is true of one who can take what is not his without being nagged by his conscience afterward. Such a person will have no problem stealing again and again. Then there is the man who can deceive his wife repeatedly without any evident guilt. One can hardly expect such a man to give a thought to his wife's emotional and mental anguish. For that reason, he will persist in hurting her that way, unaware or unmindful that he hurts as well his own standing in her eyes, not to mention the state of his soul.

It is no secret that people who are unable to feel moral pain harm themselves and others progressively by their self-indulgent and antisocial acts. There is a name for them, but let me not use it here.

There are people, for example, who love pleasurable activities so much that they indulge in these to excess—that is, beyond what is considered proper, healthful, socially and morally acceptable. Such activities as eating, drinking wine or liquor and playing games of chance, for example, give pleasure. Done to excess, they move from the domain of sustenance, permitted pleasure, camaraderie and innocent recreation to the realm of vice. Then there is romantic love. To fall in love with and have the courage to pursue a woman and then to have the sense of responsibility to marry her properly and provide for her and one's children by her—these speak well of a man and his manliness. But what is one to say of a man who collects mistresses, when his known religious affiliation and the norms of the society he belongs to forbid having even just one? This suggests a man of inordinate appetites, and does not have the strength of will to rein them in, or perhaps is simply indifferent to religious, moral and social strictures. Either such a man sees nothing wrong with these excesses, or he believes he is above moral laws and social norms. One may safely assume that such a man is insensitive to the presumable pain this causes his wife, his mother, his sisters and perhaps the mistresses themselves (unless he provides for them so well as to dull that pain, if it does exist). How is one to trust a man possessed of this kind of reputation?

The desire to be fair and not misjudge anyone is a natural human attribute present in us all in varying degrees. The author, for one, has made a supreme attempt to assume that until the impeachment trial is over, one may not justly or charitably conclude that the incumbent President is guilty of the charges for which he faces removal from office.

Unfortunately, given the image he has made for himself, of a man so used to indulging himself, the accused has by the same token etched in the public mind the impression of a man accustomed to overstepping social and moral limits. If, difficult as it may be for some to believe this, he is in fact innocent, then the accused has himself to blame for causing people to believe that he is otherwise. For he has portrayed himself as someone eminently capable of committing the impeachable offenses leveled against him.

There is still another kind of pain. I speak of shared pain, or if you will, vicarious pain. It is also known as compassion. Today both the President and the nation have cause to feel pain, if for different reasons. Now who must show compassion for whom? There are those who would find it hard to feel compassion for Mr. Estrada. Let us, to be fair, say simply that the nation appears divided on this. Still, it seems only right that a leader should manifest compassion for the people he rules, more than the other way around. And today without a doubt the nation is hurting. If he could feel this, Mr. Estrada would know what to do.

We all need a sense of compassion and the capacity to feel moral pain. But perhaps none more so than presidents and kings. Without it, after all, a ruler is bound to hurt not only himself and his family, but a whole nation.

Maria Socorro G. Naguit is associate editor of Parents, a family magazine. She has edited books for various publishing companies, among which is "The Healing Cut," winner of last year's National Book Award in Medicine.

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Jakarta relaxes grip on power

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But the experiment will be risky. Western analysts say that while in theory it is a good idea, they warn that in practice it may further fracture Indonesia rather than bind it together.

World Bank Senior Economist Bert Hofman said a lack of planning, necessary financing and skilled professionals in outlying areas may lead to greater political and economic chaos. *AP*

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This violation of human rights is taken for granted. But it racks up almost 10 million deaths yearly from diseases linked to water scarcities or pollution. Diarrhea kills more than two million children in the poorer countries.

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Latest studies show that Association of Southeast Asian Nations members do not have vast resources they complacently thought available. *Depthnews*

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Despite Beijing's coolness, Xiamen Chinese anticipate links to Taiwan

XIAMEN, China—Chen Ting hopes Taiwanese big spenders will roll into her nightclub. Liu Zunjing anticipates getting his hands more easily on the Taiwanese knives he sells, and Zhou Min envisions depositors lining up outside his bank.

Residents of the lively Chinese port of Xiamen are hoping for a windfall when Taiwan lifts a 51-year-old ban Monday and allows ships and people from two tiny Taiwanese-controlled islets to travel to the Chinese mainland to trade, visit relatives or just have fun.

Beijing is unenthusiastic, saying Taiwan isn't going far enough with its "mini-three links." They allow travel only to and from the island fortress of Kinmen just outside Xiamen's harbor and Matsu, which lies nine kilometers off the Chinese coast farther north.

Beijing wants Taipei to lift all restrictions and let ships, aircraft and mail cross the 160-kilometer-wide Taiwan Strait that divides China and Taiwan's main island.

But Xiamen's business-minded residents nevertheless hope that once Taiwanese from outlying islands can cross over, they'll find the attractive, semitropical city's rustic charms, cheap shops and varied nightlife too much to resist. They hope that Taiwanese investment, already a pillar of Xiamen's economy, will skyrocket.

"The mini-three links are going to mean the Taiwanese won't have to sneak around. There are going to be lots more customers here and it'll be easier to get goods," said Liu, the purveyor of Taiwanese kitchen knives much prized by Xiamen residents.

Essentially, Taiwan is legalizing an already-bustling illicit trade that has gone on for years between Matsu and Kinmen, also known as Quemoy, and China. Both islands are much closer to China than to Taiwan itself.

Just an hour's drive from Xiamen, through dusty villages and sprawling banyan trees, shops at the Dadeng Island Taiwan Trade Market already offer an array of tax-free goods smuggled from Kinmen: bottles of fiery sorghum liquor, Taiwanese packaged foods and hair care products. Taiwanese stock up here on garlic, mushrooms, toys and fake Rolex watches.

And despite five decades of separation between China and Taiwan, reminders of Taiwan abound in Xiamen. Many Taiwanese migrated from the region around Xiamen over the last 400 years, and people on both sides speak a similar dialect. Billboards of Taiwanese companies that have invested in Xiamen's industrial zone line the highway from the city's new airport, and Xiamen residents watch Taiwanese television. *AP*

KUFFUOR

New Ghana president is veteran politician

ACCRA, Ghana—Ghana's president-elect is a mild-mannered British-trained lawyer with more than 30 years of political experience behind him—a sharp contrast to the flamboyant former fighter pilot who has dominated politics in this West African country for two decades.

John Agyekum Kuffuor, 62, does not have the charisma of his predecessor, President Jerry Rawlings. But he is regarded as an experienced and levelheaded opposition leader who represents the change sought by many in Ghana, which has been hit by a steep economic decline in recent years.

Kuffuor was declared the winner Saturday in a runoff election against Rawlings' chosen successor, Vice President John Atta Mills.

With ballots counted in all but one of the country's 200 constituencies, the national electoral commission said Kuffuor had won 56.7 percent of the vote, compared to 43.2 percent for Mills.

Mills conceded defeat in an earlier statement, signaling an orderly transfer of power after a vote marred by scattered clashes between supporters of both sides.

Many Ghanaians went into Thursday's vote saying they were ready for new leadership.

"God has answered the prayers of Ghanaians by giving us the change we have all longed for," trader Ama Blankson said after Mills conceded defeat. "We really needed it."

Kuffuor, a Roman Catholic from the country's influential Ashanti tribe, campaigned on a platform of "positive change."

He has promised to revive the economy and improve education and health services.

Kuffuor was a founding member of the opposition New Patriotic Party and was twice elected to parliament. He has served as deputy foreign minister, and in 1982, accepted a position in Rawlings' administration as local government secretary. He resigned after several months over political differences.

He made one previous run for the presidency, coming second to Rawlings in 1996.

A soccer enthusiast, Kuffuor spent three years as chair of Asante Kotoko, one of the nation's most popular soccer clubs.

He is married and has five children. *AP*

Record snowstorm chokes most of US East Coast

NEW YORK—A record snowstorm swept up the East Coast dumping more than 60 cm of snow on New Jersey, closing every major airport in the New York City area for much of the day on Saturday and forcing Philadelphia to declare a snow emergency.

Hundreds of flights were canceled across the region, train and bus service was halted and motorists were slowed to a crawl. Fleets of snowplows were sent out to battle the white, wet deluge, and New York called out some National Guard troops to help.

"It's too dangerous, people's lives are at stake," bus driver James McCain said after a harrowing trip into New York City from Montclair, New Jersey. He got stuck behind another skidding bus on the ramp into the Port Authority Bus Terminal in Manhattan and his 11 passengers got out and walked.

Others chose to see the brighter side.

"You don't hear a sound in the world," said Jeffrey Greene, 56, of Merion, Pennsylvania, as he walked two kilometers) to his synagogue. "There's nothing quite like a walk in the morning with a new snow. The world seems so pure, so beautiful."

In many ways, it was a day best enjoyed by children. Seventy-five youngsters flocked to a small hill in Linwood, New Jersey to fly down on sleds and toboggans.

"Even though it's not that big of a hill, it's still pretty slippery-slidey," said 14-year-old Lisa Grossman.

As much as 62 cm of snow had fallen by mid-afternoon at Randolph in central New Jersey's Morris County, and more than 15 cm accumulated in parts of eastern Pennsylvania and Connecticut.

New York City's Central Park had 30 cm by early afternoon, a record for the date, before the snowfall eased and started turning to slush. And Newark, New Jersey collected a record with 34 cm; Bridgeport, Connecticut, had a record 22 cm.

US President Bill Clinton, meanwhile, took measures to help insulate Americans coping with snow, ice and frigid temperatures from what he said may become the coldest winter in years—releasing an additional $300 million in emergency aid. *AP*

NEW APPOINTEE AP

US President-elect George W. Bush stands behind his latest Cabinet appointee Houston Supt. Rod Paige (left) as secretary of education.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, January 1, 2000
Mary, Mother of God

1st Reading: **Num 6:22-27**
2nd Reading: **Gal 4:4-7**
Gospel: **Lk 2:16-21**

The shepherds came hurriedly and found Mary and Joseph with the baby lying in the manger. On seeing this they related what they had been told about the child, and all were astonished on hearing the shepherds.

As for Mary, she treasured all these messages and continually pondered over them.

The shepherds then returned giving glory and praise to God for all they had heard and seen, just as the angels had told them.

On the eighth day the circumcision of the baby had to be performed: he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

January 1 Monday – commentary

It is the first day of the year and we honor the Mother of the Savior. It is only fitting that we honor her whom the Church has honored from its beginning. Today's Gospel reading is an instance of honor paid to her not only by the evangelist, Luke, but by the early Church as well. As befitting her statute we give homage to Mary because she gave birth to and cared for the Savior. But we honor her only with Jesus, and never separate from Jesus. And we pay tribute to her best when, like her, we stand with Jesus.

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

CRIMINAL LAW (CRIMES AGAINST PROPERTY)—Robbery; robbery with homicide—The elements of the crimes of robbery and robbery with homicide are: (1) there is personal property; (2) the property belongs to another; (3) the taking must be with intent to gain; and (4) there is violence against or intimidation of any person, or force upon anything; and (5) homicide is committed "by reason" or "on the occasion of the robbery." All the elements concur in this case. The properties taken consisted of pieces of jewelry, a radio, rice, money and other valuables, all of which clearly belonged to the victim. The properties were violently taken and intent to gain can be presumed from the unlawful taking. In addition, the victim was killed by reason or on the occasion of the robbery. Where homicide is perpetrated with a view to rob, the offense is robbery with homicide. But if robbery was an afterthought and a minor incident in the homicide, there are two distinct offenses. Here, the killing was committed in the course of the robbery. [Citations omitted.] [Justice Ynares-Santiago, First Division, People v. Temanel, G.R. Nos. 97138-39, September 28, 2000]

DIGEST BY R.B. VERA

Chiapas governor releases 17 jailed Zapatista rebels

TUXTLA GUTIERREZ, Mexico—The head prosecutor of Mexico's Chiapas state freed 17 jailed Zapatista rebels Saturday, marking the new government's latest move to woo rebels to the negotiating table and end a seven-year conflict here.

The release—the first of 103 prisoners that Prosecutor Mariano Herran Salvati has said he will free—met a main demand of the Zapatista rebels to restart peace talks, which have been stalled since 1996. Herran Salvati did not announce a date for the release of the rest.

The rebels led a brief uprising here Jan. 1, 1994 in the name of Indian rights. Since then, rebel sympathizers and paramilitary groups have often sparred, forcing many poor Indians to flee communities across the state.

Zapatista rebel fighter Misael Perez Galvez was among the 17 prisoners who walked out of the Cerro Hueco prison here Saturday and into the noon sun. She served five years for participating in the armed uprising that rocked her country.

"Today for me, a new Mexico has been born with my freedom," said the smiling woman, who entered the prison charged with being a subversive and walked out greeted by government dignitaries who called her a freedom fighter.

Perez said her release is a concrete sign that Mexico's new government is serious about working toward peace in the troubled region.

"I believe the freedom of my Zapatista companions is a fairly clear sign and if this continues we are doing well toward reinitiating peace talks," she said.

The move fulfills a promise made by Gov. Pablo Salazar, the state's first opposition governor who took office in Dec. 8.

"We want to open the gates to be able to close a painful chapter in Chiapas," said Salazar, who met with the released prisoners during a small ceremony outside the prison. *AP*

Russians ring in new year to sound of old nat'l anthem

MOSCOW—Russians will ring in the new year to the sound of the old Soviet-era national anthem but with new lyrics written by the 87-year-old Stalinist poet who penned the original Communist version in 1943.

Some 57 years after Sergei Mikhalkov wrote the original words to the song Joseph Stalin made the national anthem, President Vladimir Putin bestowed the same honor on him for a new version, a Kremlin spokesperson said on Saturday.

The spokesperson said Putin had also signed a decree officially instating Mikhalkov's version.

"We have overcome the differences between the past and the present," Putin said, adding that he was happy that Russia was going into the new millennium with a new anthem.

Mikhalkov's lyrics were recommended by a presidential working group, which chose them from among 150 submissions.

The chorus of the anthem, which was published in its entirety by the Kremlin on Saturday, gives glory to the fatherland and to a country of which a union of fraternal Russians can be proud.

Whereas the old version focused on the Soviet Union of "freeborn Republics" and Lenin, the new one is more concerned with Russia's power and the future.

In another obvious break with Communism, God is mentioned in the new anthem's second verse: "native land, protege of God."

Mikhalkov, now 87, who is also known for writing children's verse, is the father of filmmakers Nikita Mikhalkov, an Oscar winner for best foreign language film in 1995, and Andrei Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky. He was also an outspoken critic of the dissident writer, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, and Boris Pasternak, the poet and author of Dr Zhivago. He remains an admirer of Stalin.

The lyrics and melody were published in time for celebrations on Dec. 31 and are expected to be played on state radio and television as well as in Red Square, which is a traditional New Year's gathering place. *AFP*

Couples can get married by clicking the mouse

HONG KONG—As Jeffrey Beer and Emily Chow plan their wedding, they can see what gifts they'll get by clicking the mouse.

Another click, and they're wired to restaurants offering the best deals on banquets. Then, they can check out virtual flowers, wine and tuxedos, all waiting to turn real by just a click.

Hong Kong's wedding business is going online, and many couples are saving time and money by using the Internet to arrange things. Not to mention saving themselves the traditional aggravation of planning that special day.

And if the marriage turns out to be a mistake, couples can also log on and save thousands of dollars with an Internet divorce survival kit that cuts lawyers out of the breakup.

As Web sites spring up around Hong Kong to offer quickie, convenient marriages, as well as speedy, cheaper divorces, a wedding can be put together in a week, or dissolved just as easily.

Marriage and divorce may seem to be polar opposites, but the Web sites have one thing in common: They are there to help couples save money and lessen the stress of tying the knot or setting it asunder.

Instead of hiring a lawyer, distressed couples can download a 74-page do-it-yourself divorce kit from LegalStudio.com for $59, and follow the step-by-step guidelines tackling the legal jargon. They can fill in forms and then see each other in court.

Not a dollar will go to the lawyers, who normally charge couples $1,282 to $3,846 for a simple divorce—or much more if things get complicated.

"Our objective is to offer a low-cost alternative, as Hong Kong has some of the highest legal fees in the world," said Mark Garvie, managing director of Legalstudio.com, which calls itself the first online legal resource for businesses and consumers in Asia.

Lawyers understandably hold mixed views.

"Without a lawyer's advice, a task as simple as filing in a form during the divorce process can cause big mistakes and bear serious consequences," said Paul Tse, who advertised his divorce service for $256 on buses and trains.

"It's good that such services would provide more choices for our clients, but we don't see them as a threat to our profession that thrives on personal service," said Andrew Cheng, an attorney and lawmaker.

David Lam, business development manager of We-GiveFun.com, said the marriage Web sites offers online invitations, banquet arrangement, gift registry and other services, all aimed at cutting the time and money spent on traditional Chinese marriages.

Customers can use the service from the time they register until six months after their wedding for $157.

"If you are not picky, you can get a fairly well-planned wedding ceremony in just a week's time," said Lam.

Beer, 30, a relocation consultant from Victoria, Australia, has found the service cost-effective and indispensable for friends and relatives sharing the happiness of his wedding to Chow, 28, a Hong Kong real estate manager, to be held in April.

"We are going to let them order or download the wedding photos straight from our Website," Beer said.

Most of the people who log on to plan their weddings have some background in IT, or information technology, Lam said.

Ben Lau, 32, who plans to marry Carmen Lam, 29, on Dec. 30, preferred the old-fashioned way—more than a year of planning—to getting themselves online.

"I have to spend the weekends checking prices and buying things related to our marriage all through last year," said Lau, a marketing executive. "But I won't use any online services as I find myself alien to IT."

Lam said since his company launched its services in September, about 30 couples have signed on, or 1 percent of the total market in that time. *AP*

YOUNG newlyweds Jeffrey Beer and Emily Chow browse their marriage web site at their Hong Kong apartment. Hong Kong's wedding business is going online and many couples are saving time and money by using the Internet to arrange things. AP

Gov warns of blockade vs garbage

By Nereo C. Lujan
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—Antique Gov. Exequiel Javier warned the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) of a "people's blockade" if it insists on dumping Metro Manila garbage on Semirara Island.

Javier said all pump boats in Antique would be deployed around Semirara to prevent barges carrying garbage from Metro Manila from entering the island.

The governor gave the warning after Presidential Adviser on Flagship Projects Robert Aventajado told them in a close door meeting that the plan would proceed despite strong opposition from the people of Antique.

Aventajado met with Javier and other provincial officials on Friday in San Jose, Antique, to discuss the proposed landfill on Semirara, one of the nine islands that comprise Caluya town.

"It appeared that Secretary Aventajado has no intention of listening to the protests of the Antiqueños and has plans to ignore the court order," Javier told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview.

He was referring to a temporary restraining order issued by the Antique Regional Trial Court on Dec. 29 stopping any move to dump garbage on Semirara Island pending the hearing of a petition for injunction sought by the United Antiqueños, a group opposed to the plan.

Javier quoted Aventajado as telling him that the MMDA would resort to a "national course of action" so it can proceed with using Semirara Island as its dump.

Aventajado is chair of the Greater Metropolitan Manila Solid Waste Management Committee, the body that was given the task of addressing Metro Manila's garbage problem.

The INQUIRER tried but failed to get the comment of Aventajado.

Javier said Aventajado insisted on pushing through with the project because a contract was already awarded to a consortium composed of DMCI Holdings, Celdex of Canada and R-II Builders.

He said Aventajado and MMDA Chair Jejomar Binay were sued by a foreign firm that earlier won an award to build a waste-to-energy plant that would end Manila's garbage crisis.

But the award for Jancom Environmental Corp. was rescinded after President Estrada reportedly found it "no longer feasible" following the enactment of the Clean Air Act.

The firm, reports said, obtained a writ of execution from the Pasig Regional Trial Court that also ordered Aventajado and Binay not to invite bids for any waste disposal project.

Javier said Jancom sued Aventajado and Binay on Dec. 29 for ignoring the court order and asked the Pasig RTC to declare them in contempt for awarding the contract to the DMCI-Celdex-R-II Builders consortium.

"I learned that Jancom is prepared to install a state-of-the-art solid waste management facility within six months upon the ratification of the contract by the President," he told the INQUIRER.

Javier said during the meeting, Aventajado asked him to allow dumping on Semirara even for only six months because the MMDA could no longer use the landfill in San Mateo, Rizal, starting today.

"He asked for a six-month reconsideration in the meantime that they are looking for alternative solutions. But I told him to instead ask San Mateo to accommodate MMDA's garbage for six months," he said.

"And if an award has already been made to Jancom, that means there is an alternative site to Semirara," Javier added.

New invader approaching Semirara shore

By Nereo Lujan and Hazel Villa
San Jose, Antique

(*Last of three parts*)

SPECIAL REPORT

METRO Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Chair Jejomar Binay and Presidential Adviser on Flagship Projects Robert Aventajado have insisted that chemical wastes would be properly treated.

"We assure you, we are putting up safety measures," said Binay during a presentation before Antique's provincial board on Dec. 15.

Among the proposed safety measures is to put a clay liner at least 0.6 meters thick at the disposal area.

A clay liner is one of three types of bottom liners that would create a bathtub in the ground. But if that fails, wastes will seep into the soil.

The 28-hectare disposal site will be integrated into the current mining activities of the Panian Mine since the facility will be part of the mining waste disposal process.

"The disposal area is initially designed with a capacity of 2,000 tons per day of waste representing a third of the total waste generation of Metro Manila. Three to five hectares will initially be required to handle the first batch of waste coming in from Manila," said the proposal.

The MMDA said the "disposal area" offers enough space to allow the construction of a dump for the waste of Metro Manila.

Five barges, each with a minimum carrying capacity of 5,000 tons, will transport garbage from Manila to Semirara. Travel time for transporting the waste is about 24 hours.

The DMCI-led consortium that is building the dump said the local government will benefit from the taxes that would be generated by the dump operation.

WOOING Antique, MMDA Chair Jejomar Binay and Flagship Projects Secretary Robert Aventajado present their project Dec. 15 before members of the Antique provincial board. HAZEL VILLA

It would also create jobs, provide the town with a share in the waste revenue, pave the way for the production of organic compost and earn for the town income from recyclable materials.

The MMDA will pay the DMCI/ Celdex consortium P950 per ton of garbage, said Rogelio Orense, a representative of the MMDA.

In the proposal, geomembranes (high-density polyethylene or HDPE) will be used to add protection to the ground layer.

Mounting opposition

Drainage systems will also be installed and chemical deodorizers sprayed over the waste.

"Tipping areas will be provided with a dedicated drainage system where leachate will be collected and treated to reduce the levels of toxicity," added the MMDA report.

But many Antiqueños are not convinced the project will be environmentally safe.

"The garbage is being bought by barge and if it falls into the sea, you can't pick it up," said Gideon Javier, son of slain Antique Gov. Evelio Javier.

Also, Javier said, the project is not really a landfill. "It is an open pit directly connected to the ground water that carries leachate faster. We have a compounded problem," said Javier, citing studies from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The Environmental Research Foundation in Annapolis, USA calls it a "bathtub in the ground" which leaks two ways: out of the bottom or over the top.

A study by the US EPA says all landfills leak.

"There is good theoretical and empirical evidence that the hazardous contents that are placed in land disposal facilities very likely will migrate from the facility into the broader environment," said the EPA report. "This may occur several years, even many decades, after (the) placement of the waste in the facility, but data and scientific prediction indicate that, in most cases, even with the application of the best available land disposal technology, it (leaks) will occur eventually."

The opposition to the plan is mounting. Signature campaigns against the project have been launched. Antiqueños in the United States have joined the campaign. E-mail campaigns and cyber-protests flood the Internet. Protest rallies have been set.

The resistance continues, especially for the islanders who will bear the consequences of what has been described as a shortsighted approach at ending the garbage problem in Metro Manila.

For them, there is a real need to defeat the approaching invader before it reaches the shores of the island or they would wake up finding a version of Smokey Mountain at their doorsteps.

Rizal cult members say Estrada strayed from hero's teachings

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

ARAYAT, Pampanga—"Do not worry. Do not meddle in the affairs of the outside world. The Father will refine His movie of our lives."

Amid the uncertainties now gripping the country, a cult that worships national hero Jose Rizal and lives at the foothills of Mt. Arayat has taken solace in this message, proclaimed in 1989 by the Mahal na Ina Birheng Sinukwan, said to be the incarnated Rizal and revered as the cult's god.

On the 104th death anniversary of Rizal on Friday, the Rizalistas here said the message's reference to "*pelikula*" (film) also foretold of having an actor for a President.

On the eve of Rizal's death when they began gathering at the Señor Ignacio Coronado Jose Protacio Rizal Mahal na Ina Birheng Sinukwan Universal Shrine in Barangay San Juan Baño here, their contemplation included President Estrada's life vis-à-vis the teachings of Rizal, the Amang Infinito (Infinite Father).

"*Hindi niya inuuna ang Inang Bayan at yung kanyang mga anak. Walang paglingap. Walang kilalang bayani. Walang alam sa kanyang trabaho* (He did not prioritize his Motherland and his children. He does not care. He does not recognize heroes. He does not know his job)," said Apung Esting Malang, the cult's spokesperson, of President Estrada.

But Apung Esting, past his 60s, urged the cult's followers to respect the President.

"*Igalang natin si* Joseph. *Tao ang naglagay sa kanya. Hintayin ang panahon na matapos siya sa panunungkulan* (Let us respect Joseph. The people elected him. Let us wait until the time he completes his term)," he said.

However, he expressed the hope that the Filipinos, as one of Rizal's teachings had advised, would "learn from their mistakes and choose a good leader next time."

The only way to salvation for everyone, including President Estrada, as the Mahal na Inang Birheng Sinukwan had warned before she died on Dec. 7, 1991, was to follow and practice the 10 teachings of Rizal, he said.

The Rizalistas believed, however, that her spirit is ever present in the 1,000-sq. m. wide compound at the mountain's foothills, constantly guiding them in living out Rizal's teachings.

Teachings

According to Apung Esting, Rizal's teachings began through Señor Ignacio Coronado of Lichiria in Calamba, Laguna.

Coronado, called the "Matan–dang Rizal," (Old Rizal) was said to have transfigured himself as a Magtanggol Coronado or the "Binatang Rizal," (Young Rizal) to woo the Mahal na Ina Birheng Sinukwan who grew up in Tondo.

In 1947, he passed on to her the crown of 48 stars, symbolizing complete perfection. The crown was her signal to begin her *misteryo* (mystery).

She came to Pampanga that same year, first roaming the province as a woman in dirty clothes and with hair full of lice. In 1950, garbed in white, she established the sanctuary in Arayat.

In his writings, Rizal often referred to a Great Mother who shall lead the people to the right path.

In Chapter 14 of Rizal's Noli Me Tangere, Apung Esting said the "*Dalubhasang Guro na magtuturo sa amin* (the Great Teacher who would teach us)" was one who would "*mag-aanyong isang mahinang binibini* (appear as a weak woman)."

LOOKING at Rizal as god, members of the Rizalista cult kneel in front of the hero's monument at the Luneta Park during cult rituals in 1988. FILE PHOTO

This Great Teacher, the Rizalistas believed, was the Mahal na Ina Birheng Sinukwan.

Apung Esting said she chose to popularize Rizal's teachings on Mt. Arayat, whose old name was Sinukwan (to whom everyone surrenders).

Rizal's writings said people would surrender to the Great Mother.

These teachings, according to Apung Esting, were similar to the Catholic Church's 10 Commandments. High on Rizal's teachings, however, was love for country and countrymen, humility and honesty.

The Rizalistas of Mt. Arayat, who confined themselves in the compound ringed by high walls of bamboo, remained unfazed by the turbulent times.

Apung Esting said the Mahal na Ina Birheng Sinukwan had long warned: "*Magaganap ang lahat ng kaguluhan* (Hell will break loose)."

Reading, singing

On the eve of Rizal's death, more than 50 Rizalistas gathered before a sanctuary where several puffer fish, an empty cage and dozens of Philippine flags hang.

Inside the candle-lit sanctuary, actually a hut made of bamboo, was a white bust of the national hero surrounded also by Philippine flags and flowers.

Outside the sanctuary, a huge portrait of Rizal was placed.

During prayers said thrice that day, the Rizalistas wore white or pink robes, stood upright before this portrait and placed their right hand on their breast. They sang the songs the Mahal na Ina taught them.

A lyre and a guitar accompany them in their singing of hymns replete with themes of patriotism.

On Friday, about 300 Rizalistas from various parts of Central and Southern Luzon came in droves. They moved about in a tranquil pace, never hurried or harried.

Their ages varied. The youngest was 8 years old while the oldest was past 80.

Under an almost century-old tamarind tree, they sang "Sa Lansangan ng Hari," (At the Road of the King) the opening song of the ceremony.

After the collective singing, Apung Esting recalled in details before the congregation the execution of Rizal. He also read Rizal's *Mi Ultimo Adios* (My Last Farewell).

The elders said more messages that intoned of the teachings of Rizal. They recited Rizal's poems.

At lunch, they shared a banquet of fish, chicken and rice.

In the afternoon, they huddled in small groups to read and discuss Noli Me Tangere and El Filibusterismo, old copies of which were donated by the National Historical Institute.

Some retreated in their wooden cubicles or huts to contemplate for the rest of the day.

Balanga folk vote to OK town cityhood

BALANGA CITY—The capital town Balanga of Bataan is now a component city after residents endorsed its cityhood bid in a plebiscite on Saturday.

Reports from the Commission on Elections said 18,149 residents voted for the town's cityhood bid while 1,917 rejected it.

Mayor Albert Garcia said with the conversion of Balanga into a component city, "it is now on the road to progress and there is no way of stopping it."

Balanga is the first city in Bataan and the second city to be created in Central Luzon in December 2000 after the Science City of Muñoz in Nueva Ecija.

Muñoz became the country's first science city after voters in the town overwhelmingly approved the town's conversion in a recent plebiscite. ***Greg Refraccion, PDI Central Luzon Desk***

Poetry found good healing method for drug patients in rehab center

TAGAYTAY CITY—It could be a scene straight out of the movie "Dead Poets' Society" where students are drawn to poetry through the encouragement given by a maverick professor played by Robin Williams.

Every Saturday, 15 patients at the NBI Treatment and Rehabilitation Center in Tagaytay City share the poems they wrote under the guidance and tutelage of Palanca awardee and UP creative writing teacher Vim Nadera in a Citizens' DrugWatch project called "poetry therapy workshop for drug patients."

The poetry comes with doses of therapy as Nadera encourages his students to pour out their soul in a private journal and use poetry as a mode of creative expression. Through the weekly sessions, the patients are asked to reflect on their relationships with family and friends and on changes they would like to see in their lives.

The poetry sessions appear to be working. Dr. Marvin Diokno, NBI-TRC administrator, said there was an increase in the motivation of the participating "poets" to do well and take writing seriously as a hobby.

Dr. Alfonso Villaroman, also with the NBI rehabilitation center, said the poetry sessions enabled patients to discover themselves.

In a statement from the DrugWatch, Nadera was quoted as saying the weekly sessions were not literary workshops because such would require stricter application of rules on form, substance and grammar.

"Poetry therapy is a channel by which these recovering drug dependents can find their inner voice and express themselves in a more positive and creative manner," Nadera was quoted as saying.

Susan Ople, DrugWatch executive director, said in the statement that the 15 drug patients, whose names were withheld, plan to continue with the poetry sessions even after their release from the rehabilitation center.

Some volunteered to help in future poetry therapy sessions.

The first batch of participants to the DrugWatch poetry sessions would graduate on Jan. 13 in simple rites that would include poetry readings and a launching of their booklet of poems.

Vendors recall 1994 Calamba fire

CALAMBA, Laguna—The fire that razed almost the entire public market of this town on Dec. 31, 1994, has left a deep scar in the hearts of about 1,000 businessmen here who lost millions of pesos in merchandise and were displaced.

"It was the most painful thing that happened in my life," recalled Elias Alcantara, 50, a vendor since he was 6 years old.

"We were forced to transfer here (temporarily) with an assurance from Mayor Severino Lajara that we, the original occupants, are first priority once the reconstruction of the public market is completed," added Alcantara, one of the traders who were displaced because of the fire.

"I was then a dealer of grocery items, fruits and vegetables," he said.

The fire happened at about 10:30 a.m., a day before New Year of 1994, when all business outlets were full of stocks and where customers had packed the entire public market area.

While government authorities had maintained that the cause of the fire came from an explosion of firecrackers which had been displayed for sale in the vicinity, most of those who had lost their businesses and the public had suspected it was premeditated.

"Because of the fire, I lost about P600,000 worth of groceries, fruits and vegetables—including debts incurred from me by other small-scale vendors, which are unpaid until now," Alcantara told the INQUIRER Friday.

"My business now, six years after the fire, is worth only P100,000 I gradually earned this by borrowing money from usurers and banks as my investment capital. I used to earn P300 to P500 daily, today in our temporary relocation site at Purok 3, near barrio Lecheria, I am very lucky if I can earn up to P250 a day," the vendor intimated.

Auring Pamplona, whose family owns appliance outlets and eateries in the market, also lost millions in the fire, which her late husband suspected of being carried out by people close to the municipal mayor.

Josefina Benigno, 47, a mother of six children, said her family vegetable business worth P20,000 and their only source of livelihood then literally turned to ashes after the fire.

"Today my family has a total debt of P70,000 from three usurers or the so-called 'five-six' money lenders to be able to maintain our grocery and fresh coconut business," Benigno lamented.

"In the past, it was easier for me to earn a net income of P500 a day after deducting all the expenses for daily consumption and provision for the schooling of our children. Today, we are lucky if we can earn at least P100 per day," she claimed.

"We stayed put here at the temporary site because this was what Mayor Lajara told us as the legal public market, but the site is increasingly becoming unproductive for business because of the existing alternative site at the Trade Center (near crossing Calamba)," she said. ***Romulo Ponte, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau***

Rightist groups tagged as suspects

(From page A1)

fice worker waiting for a ride home, according to a policeman.

The five bombs were similar to devices that exploded in two malls in the cities of Mandaluyong and Makati in May, said the expert, a member of a bomb squad.

Government bomb experts are inclined to believe that almost the same type of explosives and timing devices were used in Saturday's bombings and in May.

Their initial findings raise the possibility that the same group is behind both the Saturday and the May attacks.

The expert said investigators have already detected a "pattern that is very intriguing" in their comparative study of bomb explosions in the country, but refused to be more specific.

Initial results

In a report of the initial results of their investigation, the experts said that the bombs were all improvised explosive devices and that high explosives, such as PETN, TNT and C-4, could have been used by the still unidentified bombers.

"The only difference is that last Saturday's bombs all appear to have (exploded) prematurely as compared to the bombs which exploded last May in Glorietta Mall in Makati City and SM Megamall in Mandaluyong City," the member of the bomb squad told the INQUIRER.

He said that the devices in the mall bombings used penlight and nine-volt batteries for timers and blasting caps, as well as dynamite powder, "but all without shrapnel."

"It appears in our initial investigation that the same timing device, penlight and nine-volt batteries, were used in Saturday's explosion, specifically the bomb that went off in Makati while it was being diffused by two of our colleagues," the source said.

He said that before the bomb exploded, a witness who saw the device described to police what kind of timing device or clock she saw in the plastic bag. It was not clear if he was referring to a cigarette vendor, interviewed by the INQUIRER the other day, who peeked into the bag after a garbage scavenger brought it to her stall.

Police have arrested and charged 26 suspected Moro rebels in connection with the May bombings.

'Tactical value'

Other investigators all over Metro Manila largely pursued false leads and seemed to come up against a blank wall in attempts to find the perpetrators of the attacks.

Still, National Capital Region Police Office director Chief Supt. Edgar Aglipay said the police force still has in its custody suspects and witnesses, although he refused to discuss specifics in order not to jeopardize the investigation.

"We are gathering information that has tactical value from them as well as from other sources to nail down the perpetrators," Aglipay told the INQUIRER, adding that the Presidential Anti Organized Crime Task Force was also conducting its own investigation.

Released

Felicisimo Consuelo and Edwin Trapela were released into the custody of their relatives shortly after midnight yesterday following a grueling interrogation and 10 hours of detention at the Southern Police District Office headquarters in Fort Bonifacio.

"We have found nothing to link the two to the bombings, and so they were released," said Southern Police District director Senior Supt. Manuel Cabigon.

Consuelo was arrested after he was spotted making a call on a cellular phone immediately after the explosion at an abandoned Petron station in Makati City, while Trapela was nabbed after he was seen loitering near the blast site.

The bomb exploded as policemen were trying to defuse it, instantly killing SPO4 Roberto Gutierrez and mortally wounding Insp. Nestor Salvador, who died hours later while undergoing surgery.

A duty officer at the SPDO's Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, who asked not to be named, said that the investigation showed that Consuelo had used his cellular phone to call his daughter and check on her whereabouts since she was also in Makati City.

Trapela, for his part, was just a tired employee waiting for a ride home, the officer said.

The investigators, however, asked the two released men to stay in contact just in case police need their help in the investigation.

Makati Councilors Mark Joseph and Robert Dean Smith Barbers asked the city government yesterday to provide a heroes' burial for Salvador and Gutierrez. Both were members of the Makati City police Special Weapons and Tactics-Explosive and Ordnance Division (SWAT-EOD) and were US-trained bomb disposal experts.

Security measures

Saturday's first bomb went off inside a Light Rail Transit coach just after noon. In the span of two hours, explosions were also reported in a bus in Cubao, outside the Centennial Cargo House at the Naia, at Plaza Ferguson in front of the US Embassy in Manila and at the Petron station.

Yesterday, Aglipay met with officials of the Light Rail Transit, the Metro Rail Transit and other transportation groups on possible security measures to guard against future attacks.

The Criminal Investigation and Detection Group has been tasked as the lead investigation agency tasked to solve the Makati bombing, Cabigon said. CIDG officials told the INQUIRER that they had yet to turn up anything significant.

Bomb parts recovered from the scene have been transferred to the Philippine National Police Crime Laboratory in Camp Crame.

Scraps of paper

Central Police District (CPD) investigators are now going over several scraps of paper found on the lone fatality of an explosion in a bus in Cubao to find out if the unidentified man might have been a "suicide bomber."

The police found the paper in the victim's pocket, said Senior Insp. Rudy Jaraza, CPD's Criminal Investigation Unit-homicide division chief.

Jaraza would not disclose what the information was but said that it could help in pinning down the perpetrators of the attacks.

"It's highly probable that the lone fatality in the bus bombing was the bomb carrier himself. He might have had another target but the explosive detonated before he could get there," Jaraza said.

The bomb parts disintegrated in the blast, Jaraza said.

The blast blew the victim apart, leaving only the lower half of his body intact.

The bomb exploded as the Edsan air-conditioned bus was climbing out of the Cubao underpass around 12:40 p.m. Saturday.

Jaraza added that his team was waiting to question the bus driver and conductor who fled in fright after the incident.

Conductor Edwin Sanchez allegedly arrived crying at the Edsan garage right after the bombing.

Jaraza hoped to get any information from the two that may help the investigation.

Investigators are looking into the possibility that the bombers may have come from somewhere in the southern part of the metropolis. Both the LRT train and the Edsan bus came from Baclaran in Parañaque City.

In a press briefing early Saturday night, Western Police District chief Supt. Avelino Razon Jr. said the LRT bomb and another at Plaza Ferguson near the US Embassy in Ermita were "improvised or homemade."

He said the bomb at the LRT station was most probably made up of "a large amount of ammonium nitrate" with a timing device and a firing mechanism, probably a penlight whose remnants were recovered from the scene.

At the Plaza Ferguson bombing site, WPD explosives experts found evidence of nitrates used in the manufacture of dynamite. Police are still determining whether the nitrates were originally in the form of powder or liquid. ***With reports from Armand N. Nocum, Nelson F. Flores, Jerome Aning and TJ Burgonio***

'President gambling with lives for power'

these bombings and terrorist attacks the real Jose Velarde," said Fr. Joe Dizon, spokesperson of the Estrada Resign Movement, in a Mass which turned into an indignation rally at the Chino Roces Bridge (formerly Mendiola).

Prosecutors in the impeachment trial have alleged that Mr. Estrada is the Jose Velarde who has a P1.2-billion account with Equitable PCI Bank.

"Only a cowardly and desperate man can do this. Someone who has the means, a P500-million to P1.2-billion bank account, the opportunity and the motive. That's Jose Velarde," Dizon said.

Teodoro Casiño, secretary general of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, said "military men loyal to the President" had the "expertise and cold-blooded mindset" to set off a coordinated series of powerful bomb attacks.

"We will not be surprised if Estrada himself and members of his inner circle knew of and approved of such a plan."

Satur Ocampo, former National Democratic Front spokesperson, said targeting civilians reflected the "absence of moral values" of the Estrada administration.

More evil than Marcos

"There is the same pattern (between the bombings done before martial law and today's bombings) . . . but this is more evil," said Ocampo, now president of the party Bayan Muna registered with the Commission on Elections.

He said Marcos ordered mere "acoustic bombings" that did not kill civilians.

"But this time it's criminal because civilians were killed. The intention is clearly to kill. Only a criminal mind can do this," Ocampo said.

Nathanael Santiago, secretary general of Bayan Muna, said the administration's plot to scare people off from protest actions would backfire on Mr. Estrada because the "people have learned from the lessons of martial law."

"If they were frightened before, they aren't today. The protest groups are determined to call on the people to conquer this monster. It's not just state corruption but state violence," Santiago said.

Opposition leaders said that yesterday's indignation rally was meant to show that the anti-Estrada protesters would not be cowed by the bombings.

"If Estrada thinks he can prevent the people in advancing the protest movement for his immediate ouster, he is absolutely wrong. These government-instigated terrorist activities only fueled the people's clamor for his immediate ouster," said Danilo Ramos, secretary general of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas.

Isabela Rep. Heherson Alvarez challenged the Philippine National Police to give swift justice to the families of the victims and to arrest the perpetrators of the bombings.

"Use your intelligence. Use your bugging equipment. Prove to us that you deserve the intelligence funds the Congress allotted to you," Alvarez said in a press conference called by Kompil II on Saturday afternoon.

The PDP-Laban party headed by Senate President Aquilino Pimentel Jr. also condemned the bombings but called on the public "not to allow these senseless acts to alter or hamper their normal life."

"Now is the proper time for the police forces and even the military to show their true worth by capably protecting the state and its citizens," it said in a statement.

Only the police and the military have the "arms and the stomach" to carry out the bombings, Sanlakas said.

"Amidst the mayhem wrought by the bombings, the Estrada regime has added to the confusion by making scapegoats out of communist and Muslim rebels. It is simply a reflex action of the government and a standard operating procedure of the military to blame bombings of any sort on the Left or the Moros," it said in a press statement.

Sanlakas said "extreme rightists" were the only ones who have the weapons, training, and "even mindset" to conduct the five separate but successive bombings on Saturday.

The fisherfolk group Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) said the bombings were "Palace flagship projects" intended to save the Estrada administration from eventual collapse.

Visayas

In the Visayas, former Cebu Gov. Emilio Osmeña and Bohol Rep. Ernesto Herrera pointed out that the government was one of the few groups capable of carrying out the bombings.

Osmeña said his prime suspect in the bombing was the government.

He said the motive was to prevent the presentation of other pieces of evidence against Mr. Estrada and to stop the investigation.

Herrera said a certain sector of the government might have perpetrated the bombings to gain the public's sympathy and to accuse the opposition of aligning with the radical left.

He dismissed the possibility that the Abu Sayyaf might be responsible because the group was too small and could not operate in Metro Manila.

Ian Seruelo of Kompil II in Panay said government agents were the "most logical suspects" in the bomb attacks.

"We suspect that the bombings were a prelude to military and police actions aimed at preempting bigger protests that will be launched by the Left next month," he said.

Mass murderer

Leaders of two rival factions of the communist movement in the country also blamed the President for the bombings.

Exiled communist leader Jose Ma. Sison described Mr. Estrada as "not only a shameless thief but a mass murderer."

"(Mr.) Estrada has become so desperate by his exposure as Jose Velarde that he is resorting to cowardly terror bombings in a futile bid to extricate himself from his infamy as a big thief and plunderer," said Sison, the chief political consultant of the National Democratic Front.

He said the bombings were "calculated to draw attention away from the overwhelming evidence against him in the Senate trial" to pave the way for repressive actions and to "preempt the mass movement, which will surely mount in the first quarter of 2001."

"Estrada is extremely desperate and fearful of losing power, facing criminal prosecution and giving up his ill-gotten wealth. He is therefore committing the most cowardly and most heinous crimes to keep himself in power," he said.

Sison said that while the President pointed to the communist group's armed wing and the Moro rebels as the probable perpetrators in the bombings, "it is Estrada who has the strongest motive and utmost capability and opportunity to carry (these out)."

Sison said the Communist Party of the Philippines had repeatedly made public declarations that the "broad united front" and the people had already isolated "the Estrada ruling clique" and that they could remove it from power through peaceful, massive and militant mass actions.

"The proper place for the New People's Army to carry out its tactical offensives is in the countryside," he said.

Oplan Makabayan

He said the bombings were part of "Oplan Makabayan." Filemon "Popoy" Lagman, former leader of the urban hit squad of the New People's Army, said he "strongly suspect that these bombings were the handiwork of military and police elements."

"They are the only ones in the present context that are militarily and technically capable of perpetrating such widespread and sophisticated bombing operations," Lagman said." ***With reports from Philip C. Tubeza in Manila; Delfin T. Mallari Jr. PDI, Southern Luzon Bureau; and Nereo C. Lujan, Joey A. Gabieta and Jhunnex Napallacan PDI Visayas Bureau***

Erap, foes swap raps

(From page A1)

nia to improve his popularity ratings.

"I don't think it is in his character," Ejercito said of his father. "The only ones with the stomach for it are Ramos and Almonte," he said.

Ejercito accused Ramos and Almonte of ordering the bombings to unseat the President.

He cited a tape recording released in October in which Ramos and socialite Baby Arenas were talking about the need to create chaos similar to that of Indonesia in order to destabilize the Estrada administration.

But Ramos, in a radio interview, denied Ejercito's accusations.

"His statement is ridiculous because he assumed the role of Sherlock Holmes, Madame Auring and Chief Justice (Hilario) Davide Jr., all rolled into one, in making such a judgment," Ramos said in a telephone interview.

'Smaller stomach'

"In effect, by making such irresponsible statements, he (Ejercito) is bringing not only disbelief and ridicule upon himself, (but also upon) President Estrada and all of the authorities who are working so hard to come up with the truth of the matter," the former President said. "Besides, my stomach is smaller than JV's."

According to Ramos, his waistline remains at 34 inches, making him still eligible to join the Philippine National Police.

"The sum of all of the above is that I totally deny any involvement in the dastardly bombings or any connections, however remote, to these crimes," he said.

Ramos joined Mr. Estrada in condemning the bombings.

Almonte said there was no more need for anybody who wanted the President ousted to resort to bombings because the House prosecutors were already dropping enough "bombs" in the impeachment trial to convict the President.

"What more bombs do we need? Ocampo's bomb is a nuclear bomb," he said, adding that the ones unleashed Saturday could only be TNTs, black powder, and C-4 (a bomb made of synthetic plastic).

Almonte was referring to the testimony of Clarissa Ocampo, a senior vice president of Equitable PCI Bank, who testified before the Senate impeachment court on Dec. 22 that she saw the President affix his signature "Jose Velarde" on documents for an investment agreement.

"What was detonated in the Senate by Ocampo was a thermonuclear bomb and there will be more thermonuclear bombs in the days ahead," Almonte said. "So, there is no more need for the bombings."

Court battle

Ejercito had said the opposition might have resorted to the bombings because it was losing in the legal battle to have the President convicted of corruption and other charges.

"They are losing out in the Senate, so they have to play the perception game to create a picture of instability for this government," he said.

In an ambush interview Saturday night, the President did not pin the blame on the opposition, although he pointed out that communist groups, which, he said, could be responsible for the bombings, were seen joining the rallies of the opposition.

"We don't know yet if the opposition has something to do with this," he said.

Mr. Estrada described as "far out" opposition speculations that he would use the bombings to declare a state of emergency and dissolve Congress, thus stopping his impeachment trial in the Senate.

Ejercito said his father could not be behind the bombings as the President abhorred violence.

"One good thing working for the President is that it's not in his character. He has a good heart," Ejercito said. "People know that he cannot do anything like this."

Touching scene

He said the President was particularly touched by the small boy who was wounded at the bombing of an LRT train at the Blumentritt station in Manila.

"He was asking whether he could adopt the boy," Ejercito said.

He said the bombings had so affected the President that he found it hard to make a video recording of his message to the nation where he condemned the bombings and vowed to go after the perpetrators.

"I can see that he was feeling the weight of the whole tragic situation. He had to do several takes because his anger was making it impossible for him to say his message," Ejercito said.

In his visits to two hospitals on Saturday, the President was accompanied by Ernesto Maceda, his spokesperson on the impeachment trial, and Speaker Arnulfo Fuentebella.

The President was clad in a *barong tagalog* as he had just attended the wedding of one of the children of Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Angelo Reyes in Camp Aguinaldo.

Although the LRT bombing occurred at 12:15 noon, the President managed to visit the wounded only at night as the wedding ceremonies, emergency Cabinet meeting and taping of his national address took up his time.

Because of the bombings, Aguirre said the Presidential Security Group (PSG) had tightened security for the President and his family.

"The PSG and intelligence group continues to assess the security of the President and tightened it for certain purposes," the President said. ***With a report from AFP***

'Those children, those poor children'

(From page A1)

adults drenched with sweat.

Just as the train was about to pull into the Blumentritt Station, Benavidez heard a very loud explosion right in front of him.

Just before he passed out, he caught a glimpse of a woman struggling amid a pile of mangled bodies to find her children. Benavidez could not forget the sight.

Everything came in a blur. He suddenly found that he had been thrown outside the train. He was lying on the station's platform with three children passengers—one on his chest and the two others motionless in his arms.

That too, is a sight Benavidez will never forget.

House full of water

Aileen Lingo-Lingo, 30, came all the way from Cavite to visit her late husband's grave in a Valenzuela cemetery, her brother Teodoro Aying, 25, told the INQUIRER.

"Before she left Cavite, she dreamt that she was inside a house full of water. She said she was the last to be saved. She didn't know what the dream meant, but she felt she had to visit her dead husband," Aying said.

"She even asked a neighbor to teach her how to pray the rosary before she left. I don't know why. She doesn't do that."

Lingo-Lingo was on board the ill-fated LRT coach and was standing right in front of the bag containing the bomb, Aying said.

After the explosion, she was tossed on top of a pile of bloodied bodies, she told her brother.

Aileen is now in serious condition and under observation at the burn unit of the Jose Reyes hospital.

Her family is not blaming anyone, but its members are worried about the cost of Lingo-Lingo's treatment. "We're just ordinary citizens, so what can we do? We just want people to help us shoulder my sister's medical expenses," Aying said.

Never heard the blast

Twenty-year-old Sherwin Robles, another victim confined at the same hospital, suffered burns and cuts all over his body.

A station attendant at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, Robles was running late for work Saturday so he decided to take the LRT to avoid traffic.

Just before he left his home in Balut in Manila's Tondo District, his mother, who had just suffered a heart attack, warned him "not to take the LRT since it was not safe." He promised to be careful.

He arrived at the Blumentritt station a little after noon. As he waited for the southbound train, he glanced at the northbound train that was pulling up along the opposite platform.

He didn't hear a blast. He saw only darkness. When he regained consciousness, he was already in a wheelchair at the hospital.

"I hope the family of whoever did this will figure in a similar incident so (the perpetrator) will realize what he has done," Robles said bitterly.

Estrada sends chilling messages to business community

(From page A1)

ing is underlined by the fact that at the last session of the impeachment tribunal before Christmas, Mr. Estrada received devastating blows from the testimony of Clarissa G. Ocampo, senior vice president of Equitable PCI Bank, concerning his false signatures on banking documents.

Evidence introduced during 12 days of trial has tightened the noose around his neck. It must have been galling to him that the bank he considered as friendly in sheltering laundered dirty money supplied evidence against him.

The President has a strong reason to prevent through intimidation the appearance of more witnesses from the banking community, willing to spill the beans on his hidden transactions.

Problematic

It is problematic, however, whether his ill-concealed threats can stop what now seems to be an avalanche of "surprise" witnesses lined up by the prosecution.

His threats have lost credibility and the fact that several witnesses have surfaced despite risks to their lives is an indication that the President's capacity to coerce people has diminished.

In his warning, the President referred to cronies of past presidents. Let's put this issue in its proper context.

The central issue in this crisis is Mr. Estrada's governance and alleged involvement in corruption, from which have sprung the impeachment action.

No matter how much dirt he unloads on his predecessors, the transactions of the previous administrations are not under the spotlight. They were not impeached.

It is Mr. Estrada who is in hot seat. Even if he succeeds in painting the previous administration black, this does not clear him of the Articles of Impeachment.

The warning is, therefore, not directed just at corporations that have large unpaid debts to the government. The entire business community should not make the mistake or harbor the illusion that the target of the warning is a small group of businesses the President would like to tar with the brush painting them as cronies of past administrations.

The target is the entire business community that has defected from his government on a scale not even seen by the Marcos regime. The overwhelming majority of the business chambers have joined the call for his resignation.

They no longer have any representation in the Economic Coordinating Council, which has become an entirely government show in which its rubbish on alleged economic policy "initiatives" is being recycled each time the ECC meets.

Next war

If the President is acquitted, his next "war" will be on the recalcitrant business sectors.

This vindictive manifestation is, however, driving even Estrada crony banks into making available to the prosecution witnesses, such as Ocampo, and documentary evidence showing the paper trail of transactions involving laundered money.

From all indications, the new witnesses are seen as Mr. Estrada's friends and confidants. If Equitable PCI Bank has provided "insider" information, similar to the "insider" revelations of Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson on the "jueteng" payoffs, the new surprise witnesses are expected to reveal a more damaging paper trail tracing the movement of laundered money from Equitable PCI Bank to at least two still unidentified large banks.

The witnesses and the banks now cooperating with the impeachment court by supplying it with evidence and witnesses have now been driven to the wall to help convict the President because it is now a matter of the life of the Estrada presidency or their own lives and future.

If the President were acquitted, it would be hard to imagine the horror of the vendetta he could unleash to take revenge.

Zero-sum game

In the face of this very real threat of retaliation, the crisis has become a zero-sum game—either the President goes or we enter into a cycle of retaliation that can only intensify political turbulence.

The decision of the business sector to withdraw its support of the Estrada administration was a blow to the regime, albeit not fatal.

But the risk-taking by the banks and former Estrada allies in business in their willingness to testify is a more devastating blow because they are providing hard evidence in the trial of presidential extraction of wealth, using the banks as the haven of laundered money, based on insider information.

Equitable PCI Bank is cooperating because it wants to make a clean breast of questionable transactions over laundered money as a way to cut losses and to survive its financial crisis caused by heavy withdrawals.

While cooperation is a survival response, there is also considerable revulsion in the bank's leadership stratum against being used as shelters for dummy transactions.

Thus, the trial has also triggered a cleansing process in some banks and this process helps in strengthening confidence in the banking system.

Critical key

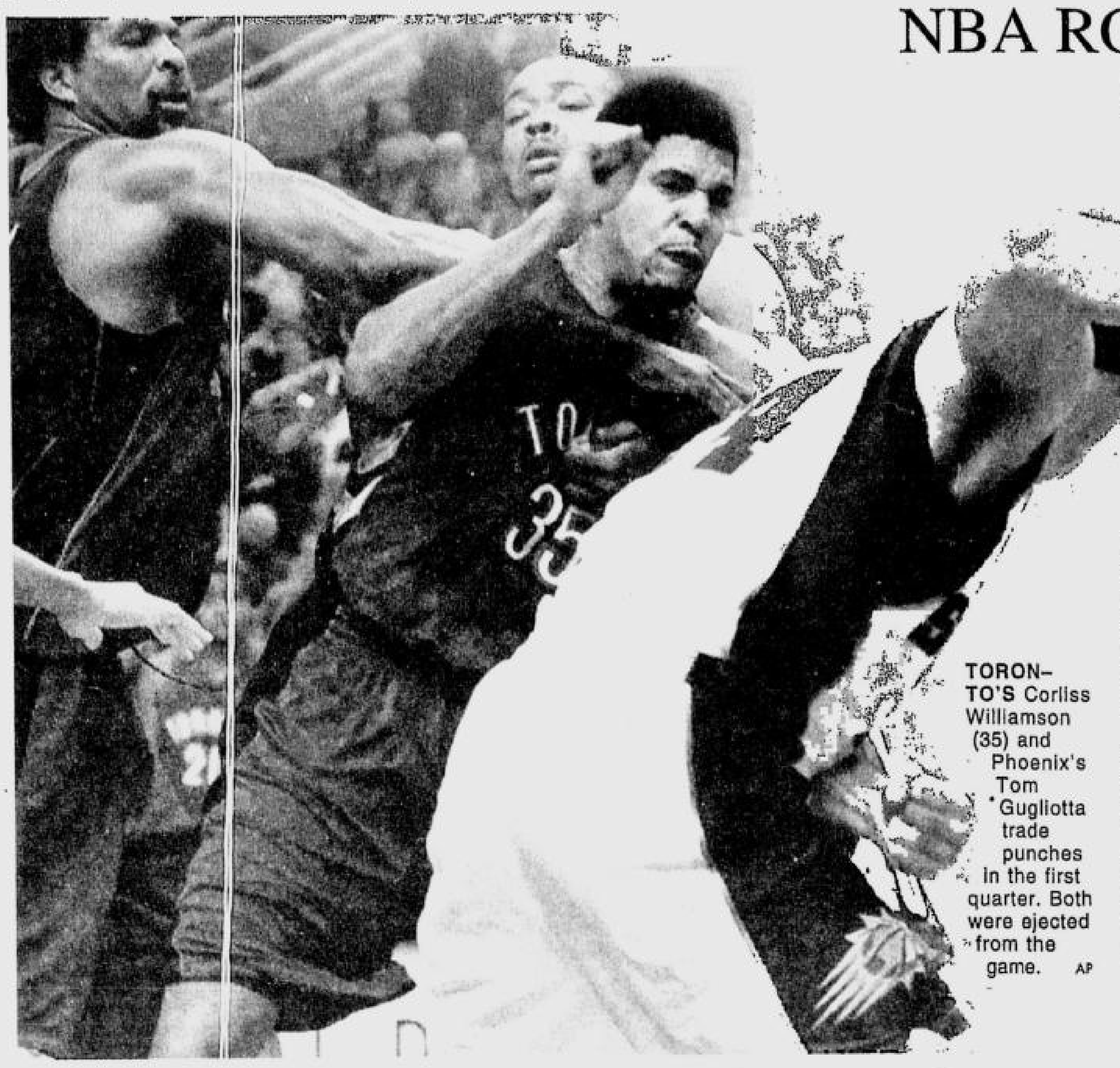
The President's threat of retaliation against businesses is at once an implicit admission that banking records are the critical key to his survival in the impeachment trial.

Singson's allegations of payoffs merely opened the way for the banks to come in to fill the gaps of the "insider" evidence he has disclosed.

Had the banks covered up, it would have been more difficult to convict the President. With the banks' seemingly unstoppable disclosure of bank documents, it would, at the end of the trial, be extremely difficult for the senator-judges to justify an acquittal.

This is why the President is playing the last card of coercion to avert the avalanche of witnesses and incriminating evidence from the banks.

Killing or abducting witnesses may no longer stem the tide of evidence. There will be too many to kill or abduct.



TORONTO'S Corliss Williamson (35) and Phoenix's Tom Gugliotta trade punches in the first quarter. Both were ejected from the game. AP

NBA ROUNDUP

76ers edge Kings, earn best record

SACRAMENTO, California—Allen Iverson scored 46 points with a whirling array of beautiful shots, and Aaron McKie, who had a triple-double, hit a 3-pointer to break a tie with 39 seconds left in overtime as the Philadelphia 76ers earned the NBA's best record after beating the Sacramento Kings, 107-104, in overtime Saturday night.

The game matched the teams with the NBA's best records entering January, but the 76ers (21-8) jumped ahead early with a blistering first quarter and never trailed the Kings (20-8) despite several nip-and-tuck minutes in regulation and a tense overtime.

Iverson, who also had nine rebounds and nine assists, drove the lane and passed to McKie in the corner for the go-ahead shot for the Sixers, who won their NBA-best 14th road game and snapped Sacramento's nine-game home winning streak.

McKie had 19 points, 14 assists and 10 rebounds in Philadelphia's first win at Arco Arena in 11 years.

Supersonics104, Hornets 102

In Seattle, Vin Baker hit a buzzer-beating jumper to lead the Seattle SuperSonics to a 104-102 win over the Charlotte Hornets on Saturday.

Baker scored eight of his 15 points in the final 3:22, capping it with a 19-footer that bounced off the rim and twice off the backboard before falling through the net just as the buzzer sounded.

David Wesley led the Hornets with 24 points and tied the game at 102 with a fall-away 3-pointer with 8.4 seconds left.

It was the second straight loss for the Hornets, who had a seven-game winning streak snapped Thursday at Sacramento.

Rockets 114, Mavericks 99

In Dallas, Steve Francis had 22 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists as Houston snapped a season-long six-game losing streak.

Cuttino Mobley had 24 points, Shandon Anderson scored 15 and Kenny Thomas added 14 points and 13 rebounds for the Rockets, who beat the Mavericks for the 16th time in their last 18 meetings.

Michael Finley scored 32 points, Steve Nash added a career-high 26 and Dirk Nowitzki had 20 to pace the Mavericks, who had won six of seven.

Suns 109, Raptors 103

In Phoenix, Vince Carter scored 46 points, 20 in the fourth quarter, but was burned for 15 by undrafted rookie Paul McPherson in the second period as Phoenix beat Toronto.

McPherson scored 20 points on 9-for-10 shooting in 16 minutes as the Suns rallied from a 17-point first-half deficit, then held off a late Raptors' rally.

Jason Kidd had 27 points, including 13 of 15 free throws, for the Suns, who were coming off a 37-point homecourt loss to the Los Angeles Lakers on Thursday—their worst loss at America West Arena.

Lakers 116, Clippers 114, OT

In Los Angeles, even after Shaquille O'Neal fouled out and Kobe Bryant was ejected, the Los Angeles Lakers still managed to beat the Clippers for the 16th consecutive time.

Horace Grant tipped in Brian Shaw's missed layup with 4.5 seconds left in overtime, then Robert Horry—who scored nine points in the final 3:47—blocked Lamar Odom's shot off a drive as time expired.

The Clippers' Eric Piatkowski scored seven of his 27 points in overtime, but it wasn't enough to keep the Clippers winless in almost four years against the Lakers.

O'Neal had 29 points and 15 rebounds when he drew his sixth foul with 1:37 remaining in regulation and the Lakers up 100-98. Bryant had 17 points when he was ejected with his second technical late in the third quarter, only the second time in his career he's been tossed. *AP*

Complete Results

Orlando 95, Boston 90; Houston 114, Dallas 99; Seattle 104, Charlotte 102; Miami 110, Detroit 102 (OT); San Antonio 89, Indiana 77; New York 88, Minnesota 79; Philadelphia 107, Sacramento 104 (OT); Phoenix 109, Toronto 103; Denver 120, Milwaukee 113; Golden State 102, Vancouver 101; LA Lakers 116, LA Clippers 114 (OT). *AFP*

Stadium collapse injures fans

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil—The state governor suspended the second leg of the Joao Havelange Cup final between Vasco da Gama and Sao Caetano on Saturday after a perimeter fence at the Sao Januario stadium collapsed, injuring dozens of fans and leaving the championship undecided.

The crush happened 23 minutes into the match with the score 0-0. Two minutes after Vasco's star striker Romario suffered a leg strain and was substituted by Viola, there was a sudden movement in the upper rows on one side of the stand.

Fans began to press forward, sending those in lower rows sprawling and pressing supporters in the bottom rows against the metal fence, which bent under the weight and collapsed. Some fans were caught, others scrambled onto the field.

There were no immediate reports of deaths but 90 injured fans were taken to Rio's Souza Aguiar hospital, where holiday medical staff was reinforced. Three fans were reported seriously injured.

Police and medics treated the wounded and helped them to ambulances and helicopters while players and team officials gathered on the field to debate whether to restart the game.

A decision was made when State Governor Anthony Garotinho telephoned there to meet and announce a decision, possibly on Tuesday, according to Agencia Estado. *AP*

Player payroll

NBA NOTES

Henry Liao

MORE on player salaries.

Did you know that an NBA-record 35 players are making at least $10 million during the 2000-01 season?

The Portland Trail Blazers, who lead the NBA in player payroll with $51 million over the salary cap at $86.5 million, have the most number of $10-million players at five-Scottie Pippen ($13.8 million), Rasheed Wallace ($12.6 million); Shawn Kemp ($11.7 million), Arvydas Sabonis ($11.3 million) and Damon Stoudamire ($11.3 million).

A pair of clubs has three each. They are the Washington Wizards—Juwan Howard ($16.9 million), Witch Richmond ($10 million) and Rod Strickland ($10 million)—and Seattle SuperSonics—Patrick Ewing ($14.0) million), Gary Payton ($12.2 million) and Vin Baker ($10.13 million).

The other $10-million men in the league are Atlanta's Dikembe Mutombo ($14.4 million), Boston's Antoine Walker ($10.13 million), Cleveland's Zydrunas Ilgauskas ($10.13 million), Denver's Antonio McDyess ($10.8 million), Houston's Hakeem Olajuwon ($16.7 million), Indiana's Reggie Miller ($10.67 million), the LA Lakers' Shaquille O'Neal ($19.3 million) and Kobe Bryant ($10.13 million), Miami's Alonzo Mourning ($16.9 million) and Tim Hardaway ($12 million) and Milwaukee's Ray Allen ($10.13) million);

Minnesota's Kevin Garnett (the NBA's highest-paid at $19.6 million), New Jersey's retire Jayson Williams (who is getting $13.8 million from the Nets because of a guaranteed contract despite having called it quits last summer due to various injuries) and Staphon Marbury ($10.130 million), New York's Latrell Sprewell ($10.1 million) and Larry Johnson ($11 million), Philadelphia's Allen Iverson ($10.13 million), Phoenix's Anfernee Hardaway ($10.13 million), Sacramento's Chris Webber ($12 million), San Antonio's David Robinzon ($14.7 million), Utah's Karl Malone ($15.8 million) and John Stockton ($11 million), and Vancouver's Shareef Abdur-Rahim ($10.13 million) and Bryant Reeves ($10.11 million).

Note that Iverson (No. 1 overall pick), Abdur-Rahim, Marbury, Allen, Walker, Bryant and Ilgauskas belong to the 1996 Rookie Class and all got the maximum contract allowable.

Of the list., 14 players have appeared in an NBA Finals at least once and five of them own a championship ring—Pippen (with Chicago—from 1991-93 and 1996-98), Olajuwon (with Houston in 1994 and 1995), O'Neal (with Lakers in 2000), Bryant (with Lakers in 2000) and Robinson (with San Antonio in 1999).

Only eight NBA teams don't have a player making at least $10 million this season. They are (highest-paid in parentheses) Charlotte's Elden Campbell, $8.05 million), Chicago's (Ron Mercer, $5.52 million), Dallas (Michael Finley, $8.4 million), Detroit (Jerry Stackhouse, $5.31 million), Golden State (Erick Dampier, $5.61 million), LA Clippers (Michael Olowokandi, $3.7 million), Orlando (Grant Hill and Tracy McGracy, $9.66 million each) and Toronto (Charles Oakley, $5.76 million).

NFL ACTION

Saints oust Rams; Dolphins win

NEW ORLEANS—Nothing has ever come easy for the New Orleans Saints. Naturally, winning their first playoff game after 34 years and knocking out the defending Super Bowl champions weren't any different.

Aaron Brooks threw three touchdown passes to Willie Jackson, and the Saints held off a huge fourth-quarter rally from the St. Louis Rams for a 31-28 victory Saturday.

From the voodoo ceremony before kickoff to owner Tom Benson's famous Benson Boogie at the end, it had the makings of a truly New Orleans scene, a celebration befitting a breakthrough after decades of frustration and a 0-4 lifetime and three interceptions, while losing one fumble. He wasn't sharp until the end, possibly because of the grogginess and light-sensitivity he experienced after a concussion here last week.

The NFL's Most Valuable Player, Marshall Faulk, had no such excuses, except a New Orleans defense that got tough after being embarrassed last week, allowing him 220 yards rushing in the 26-21 loss. The Saints held him to a season-low 24 yards rushing and made him a non-factor in the passing game until New Orleans led 31-7.

Dolphins 23, Colts 17

In Miami, the surprising Dolphins handed Jim Mora another playoff loss with an NFL-record performance by Lamar Smith, a resilient quarterback and stout defense.

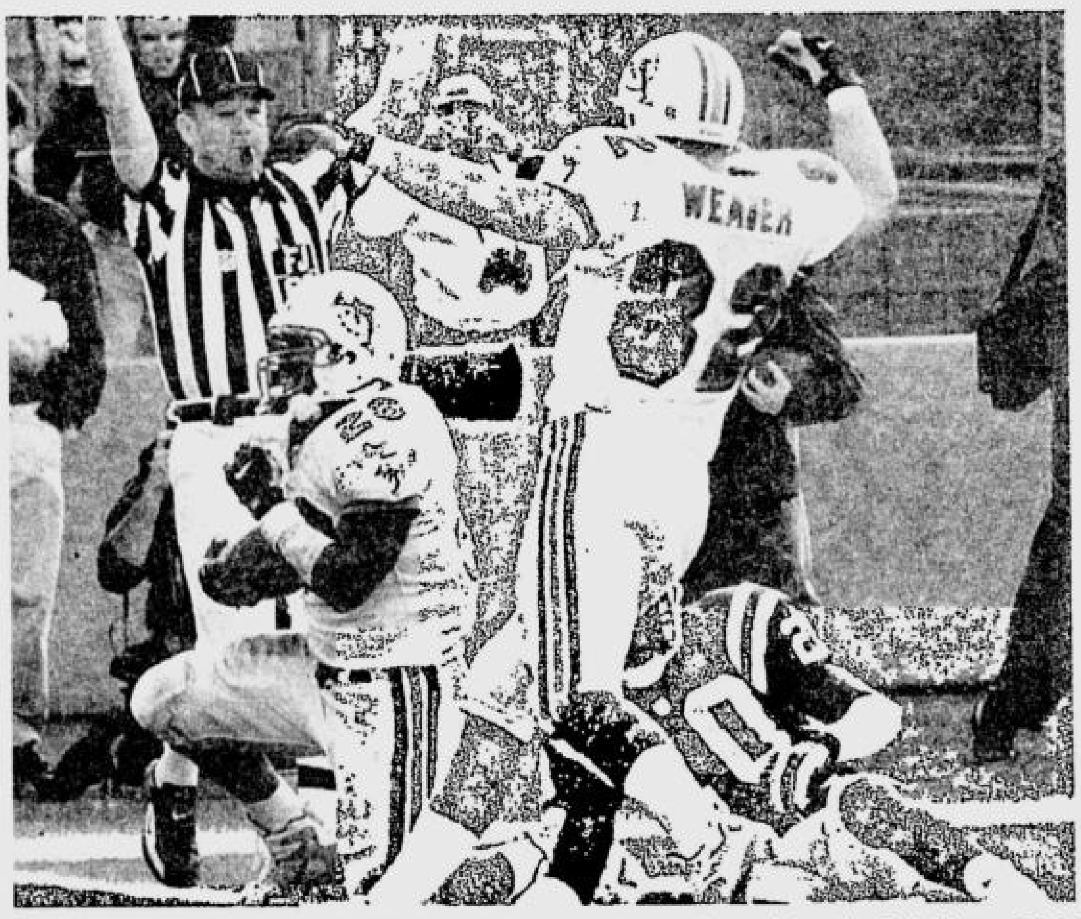
Smith scored on his 40th carry, a 17-yard run in overtime for a 23-17 wild-card playoff victory over the Indianapolis Colts on Saturday. Jay Fiedler overcame three first-half interceptions to lead a comeback from a 14-point deficit in the second half, and Miami tied the game in the final minute of regulation.

Smith's 40 carries was an NFL playoff record, and his 209 yards were the second most in playoff history behind Eric Dickerson's 248 in 1985 against Dallas. Smith dragged cornerback Jeff Burris into the end zone for the winning score, then was swarmed by jubilant teammates.

Miami drove 61 yards in 11 plays for the touchdown after Colts' Mike Vanderjagt pushed a 49-yard field goal attempt wide right.

Mora, at 65 the oldest active coach in NFL, fell to 0-6 in the playoffs in 14 seasons, including two losses with the Colts. He's the only coach in NFL history with at least 100 regular-season wins and no wins in the postseason.

The surprising Dolphins (12-5), who won the AFC East for the first time since 1994, advanced to the second round Saturday at Oakland. The Colts (10-7) were eliminated in their opening playoff game for the second year in a row. *AP*



MIAMI running back Lamar Smith (kneeling) scores in overtime, giving the Dolphins a 23-17 victory over the Indianapolis Colts. Jed Weaver (82) rushes to Smith to celebrate. AP

SPORTS ON TV

COMPILED BY LORENZO MANGUIAT

BILLIARDS: World Professional Pool Championships 2000, Day 8, Quarterfinals, 1st Session at 10 p.m. (r) on ESPN

GOLF: The 2000 Straits Cup Taipei, Day One Highlights at 8 a.m. (r) Day Four Highlights at 10 p.m. on Star Sports Senior British Open 2000, Final Round at 6:30 p.m. (r) on ESPN

BASKETBALL: PBA Governors Cup Finals at 1:30 p.m. on ESPN

AMERICAN FOOTBALL: US NCAA - 2000 Chick-A-Fil Peach Bowl at 6 a.m. 2001, Outback Bowl at midnight on ESPN Super Bowl VII Highlights - Miami Dolphins vs Washington Redskins at 4 p.m. (r) on ESPN

TENNIS: Wimbledon 2000 - Year End Review at 12 noon (r) on Star Sports

Self-reliance

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

LIFE is difficult and people are worried about the future, a future that is bleaker than bleak. Most of us are filled with fear, knowing that 2001 could very well be a very very bad new year.

Things are just as bad in the local sports scene. Sports officials are always quarelling instead of solving the perennial lack of funds which is expected to worsen with the privatization of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp.

Recall that last Oct. 20, I wrote about Pagcor's privatization and its chilling effect on the already cash-strapped Philippine Sports Commission because "Pagcor has been a major source of funding for the PSC, which in turn, provides the financial assistance to the National Sports Associations and their pool of athletes."

Two months later, on Dec. 20 to be exact, PSC chair Carlos "Butch" Tuason said: "It's going to be a big problem if and when Pagcor is privatized because whatever amount we get from the general appropriations, we cannot spend them for the NSAs. So it's the NSAs that will really be affected."

Thus warned officials of the NSAs should start asserting their financial independence from hereon. They should be self-reliant by raising their own funds instead of pestering the PSC for monetary assistance every so often.

For the record, one can count on his fingers the few NSAs that are self-reliant and individuals who do not depend on the government to promote their sports.

One of these NSAs is the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines which is headed by Manny Lopez. Ably guided by his father, former PSC chair and Manila Mayor Mel Lopez, the young Lopez has tapped the private sector to support amateur boxing through the years. Caltex Philippine is one of its avid private sponsors.

On the other hand, brothers Jose "Popit" and Aristeo "Putch" Puyat have been bankrolling the fabulous Philippine billiards team that includes world champion Efren "Bata" Reyes and Francisco "Django" Bustamante—without asking a single centavo from the government. The Puyats, by the way, also do not share in their wards' winnings which makes them truly amazing. Apart from billiards, they have likewise supported bowling, including the extraordinary Paeng Nepomuceno, the only four-time winner of the coveted Bowling World Cup.

* * *

IDOLS. Sports, cockfighting in particular, was the day's main fare during a recent chance meeting between Department of Interior and Local Government Undersecretary Jun Santiago and lawyer Rudy Salud at the Quezon City restaurant owned by former DILG Assistant Secretary Alex Padilla.

"Definitely," said Salud, "I am competing in the World Slasher Derby at the Araneta Coliseum after which I will just be a contented spectator for the rest of the season." A longtime friend, Rudy has been stricken ill recently, but he is now looking fit and well. Jun and Rudy are two of the people I most admired in sports; Jun in the field of cockfighting and Rudy, who now manages Gerry Peñalosa; in the world of boxing.

For nearly a decade, Jun, a two-time Cocker of the Year, has been my constant companion in some of the country's big-time derbies, mostly at the Araneta Coliseum. And truth be told, I learned a lot of winning tips from him. On the other hand, I honed my boxing knowledge with the help of Rudy and his bosom buddy, the late Justiniano Montane, Jr., when I joined them in a bone-tiring campaign halfway around the world, leading to Montano's election as president of the World Boxing Council and Salud as secretary general. That was in the late 1960s when Philippine boxing flourished.

* * *

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Forum's first for 2001

THE FIRST edition of the Sports Forum for the new year will be held tomorrow (Jan. 2) with officials and a key player of the Red Bull pro basketball team as guests. Team manager Tony Chua, consultant Andy Jao, coach Yeng Guiao and key player Kerby Raymundo will appear in the program starting at 10:30 a.m.

SPORTS

AL S. MENDOZA, Editor ■ EDWIN M. VILLANUEVA, Assistant Editor

Thailand's 'happiest moment'

BANGKOK, Thailand—Winning a boxing gold at the Sydney Olympics was Thailand's "happiest moment" of 2000, a poll seen Sunday said. The gold medal winner, flyweight boxer Wijan Ponlid, was also voted the "most popular male athlete," of the past year, the Suan Dusit Poll said. *AP*

BONG'S ASSURANCE

Chess body setup defended

BY JUNE NAVARRO

TAKING the cue from Grandmaster Zurab Azmaiparasvilli of Georgia, GM Bong Villamayor said becoming an athlete and at the same time performing the task of an official is a perfect blend in handling the affairs of the National Chess Federation of the Philippines.

"In my opinion, to be an athlete and an official doesn't pose any problem at all as long as you perform your functions properly and adhere transparency on your programs," said Villamayor, who acts as NCFP vice president for internal affairs.

Using Azmaiparasvilli, president of Georgia's chess federation, as role model, Villamayor assured that the NCFP's paramount concern will be the welfare of the athletes since officials and athletes enjoy the same wavelength.

But Villamayor lamented a conflict of interest in that setup, which doesn't sit well with the Philippine Sports Commission.

PSC chair Carlos Tuason said there would be a duplication of function, which would do more harm than good when the NCFP tries to solve its liquidation woes with the PSC.

He said athletes are duty-bound to compete for the country while officials are tasked to run the affairs of the national sports associations and should remain as such.

In that case, Tuason warned the NCFP would have to think about reorganizing themselves to prevent a clash of ideas with the PSC, the financial arm of the government in sports.

"We are willing to step down as officials when the right time comes. Right now, there are more things that should be given top priority," said Villamayor.

NCFP president Eugene Torre, Asia's first GM, shared Villamayor's sentiments, saying the federation is still suffering from birth pains and should first focus on putting the local woodpushers' act together.

He added they would only leave the officialdom of the NCFP and become full-fledged chess players once again when the federation is already standing on its own feet with the interest of the athletes on top of its menu.

Torre said the NCFP with the efforts of executive director Bobby Ang was all set to comply with their financial obligation early this year.

Torre and fellow GMs Joey Antonio and Villamayor spearheaded the RP delegation during the Chess Olympiad in Istanbul where they received a P.7 million financial assistance from the PSC.

Hatfield, Jarencio go to Pop

BY MARC ANTHONY REYES

TANDUAY Gold's Rudy Hatfield and Pido Jarencio were traded yesterday to Pop Cola in favor of Noli Locsin and a first-round draft, according to Pop Cola manager Elmer Yanga.

Yanga called the INQUIRER to announce the whirlwind trade which caught everybody by surprise since Hatfield is being eyed by Alaska Milk in place of Bong Hawkins.

Hatfield and Jarencio are expected to beef up the Panthers, who have been performing badly the past six years after winning two straight conference titles back in 1995.

Pop Cola also got Johnny Abarrientos and Poch Juinio after shipping to Alaska Ali Peek and Jon Ordonio two weeks ago.

Yanga said he expects Hatfield and Jarencio to blend well with Abarrientos, Juinio, Jojo Lastimosa and Nelson Asaytono.

He added Tanduay initiated the four-player trade in its pursuit to snag a big man. Although Locsin plays power forward, the Rhummakers are expected to get a big-man with their first-round draft pick. Pop Cola was supposed to pick fourth in the first round.

Yanga said he is optimistic of their chances now that the team has the right blend of experience and youth, especially with the 24-year-old Hatfield on the fold.

He added that Abarrientos vowed to claim his spot as the No. 1 pointguard in the PBA even as he denied reports that he's hooked on cockfighting.

HINGIS, wearing a novel white top with a long right sleeve and a short left one, returns a shot to Tanasugarn. AP

Hingis, pal score

PERTH, Australia—World number one Martina Hingis and her Swiss partner Roger Federer crushed Thailand 3-0 in the opening clash of the $US554,000 Hopman Cup here on Sunday.

It was a promising start for Hingis in her bid to engrave her name on a trophy that has eluded her in three previous attempts.

While she has been unbeaten in singles clashes here—having won all 11 matches in which she has been involved—Hingis has been unable to snatch the title, despite reaching the final five years ago.

"I felt very good—very confident today," Hingis, 20, said after outclassing Tamarine Tanasugarn, 23, ranked 29th. Hingis won 6-1, 6-1 in a lopsided 44 minutes.

Federer, 19, with a ranking of 29th, had too many tricks for Paradorn Srichaphan, beating the 104th ranked 21-year-old 6-4, 6-2 in 65 minutes.

In the mixed doubles, the Swiss pair coasted home in straight sets, 6-0, 6-1. *AFP*

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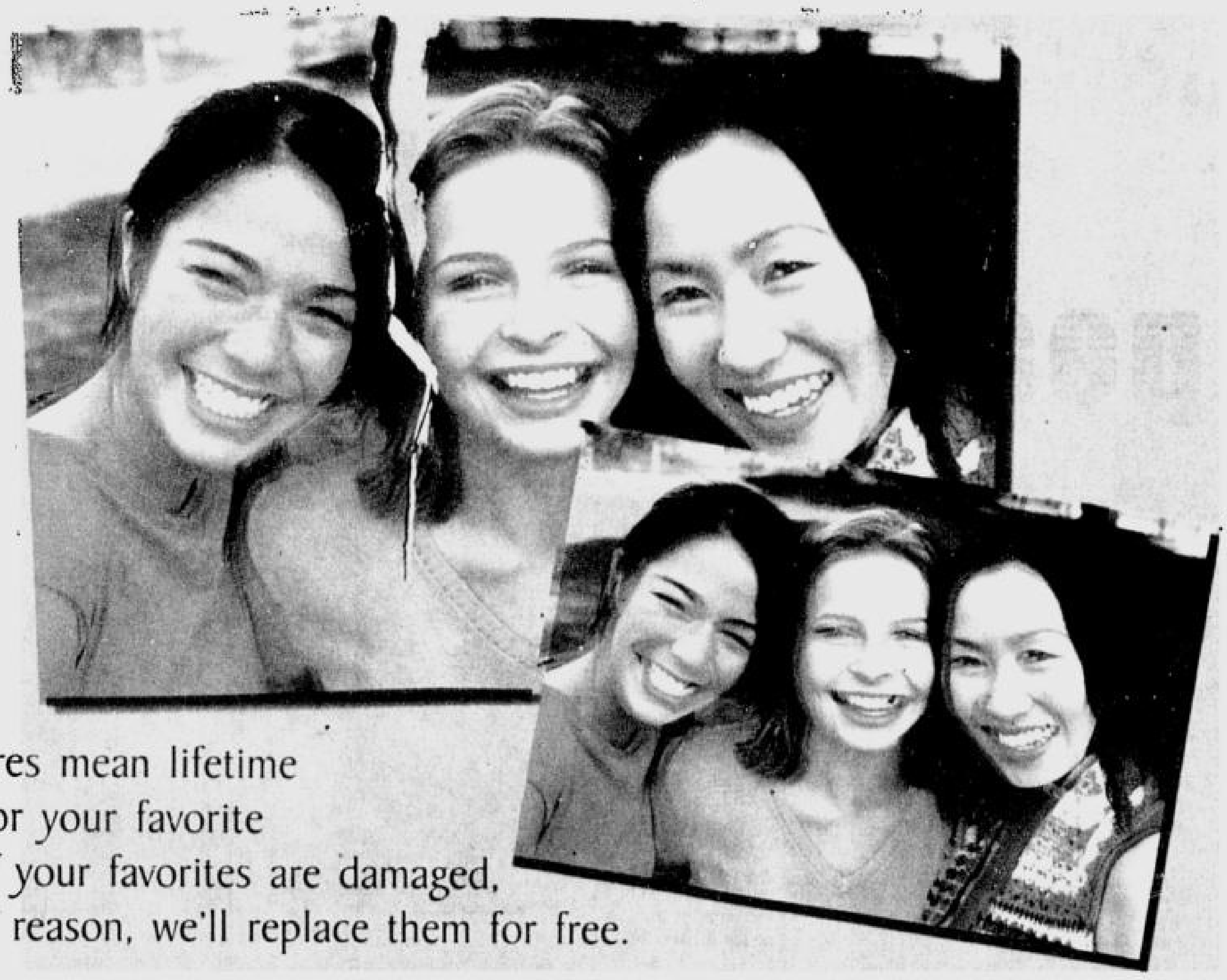

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HAPPY NEW YEAR!

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Don't fire that gun

A GROUP called the Peaceful, Responsible Owners of Guns (Progun) is appealing to all gun owners, whether civilian, police or military, to refrain from firing their guns to celebrate the New Year. Even firing in the air has killed innocent people, says Progun president Bayani Molina.

METRO

LOUIE C. CAMINO, Editor

- Merchants make money from anti-Erap fever A16
- Artists condemn bomb attacks A16

San Mateo celebrates closure of landfill

By Agnes E. Donato and Blanche S. Rivera

RESIDENTS of San Mateo, Rizal on Saturday night celebrated the closure of the nine-year-old San Mateo Sanitary Landfill, while Flagship Projects Secretary Robert Aventajado and top Rizal politicians made an early pitch at the 2001 elections in Antipolo City.

The closure of the landfill ended another year of extension granted by the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA).

In a Christmas-cum-victory party of Antipolo homeowners at the Town and Country Homes Clubhouse, Aventajado formally announced that there would be no extension to the Dec. 31 closure of the landfill.

"I know how to keep my word," Aventajado told members of the Federation of Antipolo Homeowners Association (A-Homes) and other leaders of the Citizens Committee on Landfill Closure. "The San Mateo Landfill will be closed and will remain closed."

The end of the dump's operation also signaled the freedom of Rizal residents from what Edith Regalado of the Citizens Committee on Landfill Closure called bondage. The

SAN MATEO/ A16

PANGULONG ERAP AT GOB. YNARES KAPAG
NASARA ANG LANDFILL MATITIGIL SA
PAG-AARAL ANG AMING MGA ANAK AT MAGUGUTOM

EDWIN BACASMAS

THE OTHER side, composed of people who live off the garbage, calls for maintaining the dump in Barangay Pintong Bocaue in San Mateo.

CLEANING up, MMDA worker sprays garbage with disinfectant. EDWIN BACASMAS

Erap blamed for 'silent' New Year

By Christian V. Esguerra

IF FIRECRACKERS did not sell briskly this season, blame it on President Estrada. Anti-Estrada protesters said people are too poor to spend on firecrackers because of the current political crisis.

"There will definitely be a silent New Year," Bayan secretary general Teddy Casiño said on Saturday. "Blame President Estrada for this.

"People have no reason to celebrate," he added.

Tradition says lighting firecrackers will ward off evil spirits.

To welcome the new year, Casiño said, people should not waste money on firecrackers because it would take more than these pyrotechnic devices to expel "the evil spirit that is Estrada."

"Symbolisms have no effect on Erap," he said. "We would need a social explosion to drive him away once and for all."

Casiño said the public should instead reserve whatever firecrackers are available for the series of anti-Estrada protest rallies in January.

"The political explosions through protest actions are more important," he said. "To really put our country back on track, we will need political bombs and economic explosions."

He said Bayan had so far gathered 300 pieces of firecrackers, which would be lighted during rallies as the Senate impeachment trial resumes next week.

The firecracker business has suffered considerably since 1999, said Evangeline Zamora, 26.

"I think there was a 30-percent drop in our sales this year compared to last year," Zamora said.

The Zamora family has been selling firecrackers in Marilao, Bulacan for more than 15 years now.

Until last year, firecracker stalls often cluttered MacArthur Highway from Marilao to Bocaue in Bulacan as early as the second week of December, she said.

This year, she said, there were only a few stalls in the province, which is known as the firecracker capital of the country.

"In previous years, we were very busy accommodating customers as early as right after Christmas," she said. "This year is very different."

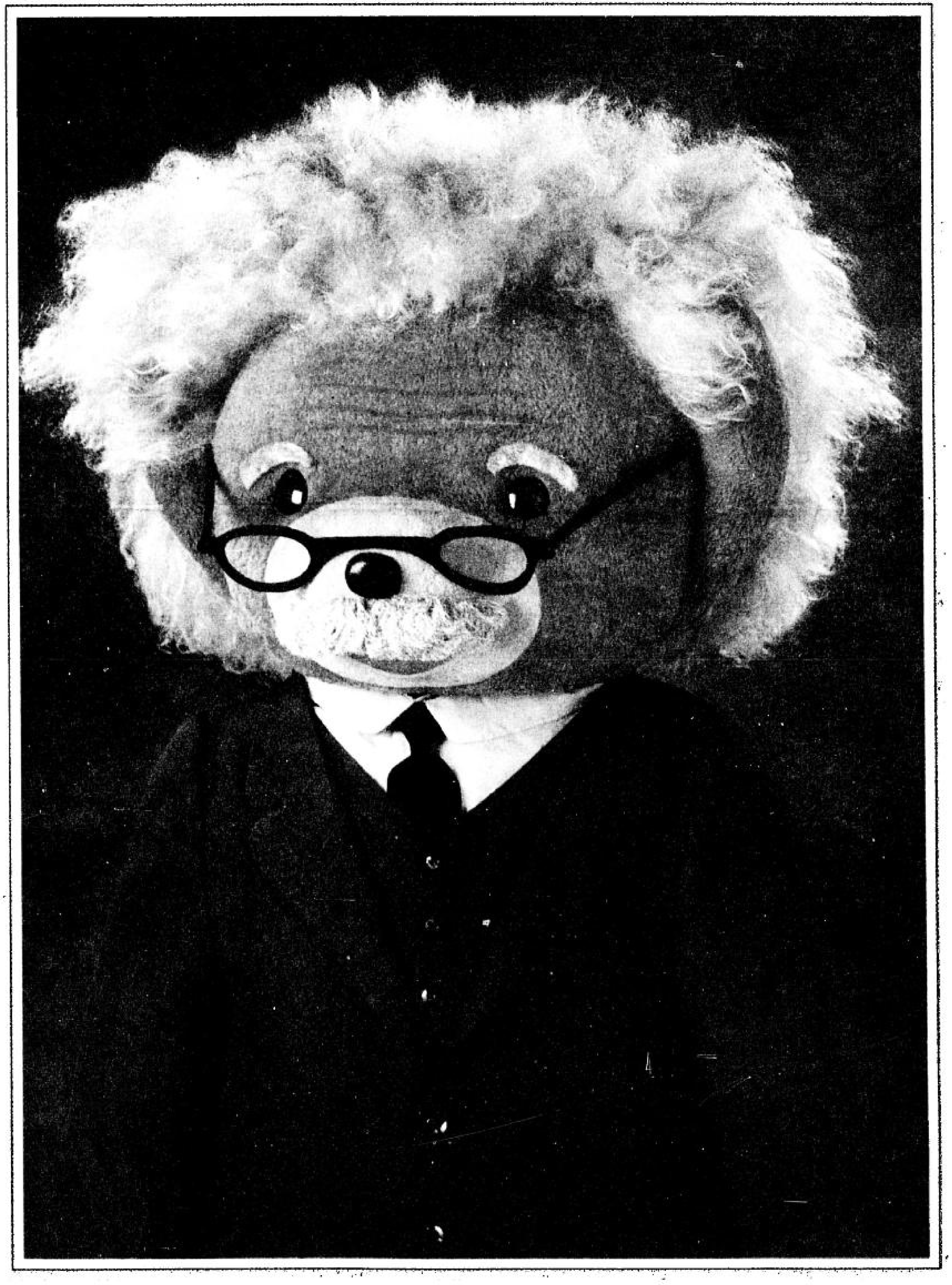
The slow business may also be blamed on the campaign by media and the Department of Health to keep the public away from firecrackers.

"The business was also badly affected by the peso devaluation," Zamora said. "Fountains, which used to be sold for P35 each, are now sold for P40."

Still, manufacturers do not seem to run out of gimmicks to help arrest the fall of the firecracker business.

New varieties of firecrackers were introduced this year to complement the traditional items such as five stars, baby rockets, fountains, sparklers, crying cow and *watusi*.

ERAP BLAMED/ A16



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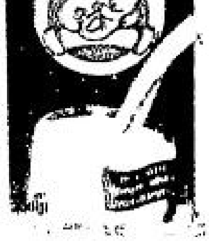

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MONTHLY DRAW PRIZES IN 9 AREAS*	DRAW DATE	DEADLINE OF ENTRIES
First Prize : P50,000 Second Prize : 20,000 Third Prize : 10,000	Feb. 21, 2001 Mar. 21, 2001	Feb. 14, 2001 Mar. 14, 2001

*GMA, North Luzon, Central Luzon, South Luzon1, South Luzon2, East Visayas, West Visayas, North Mindanao and South Mindanao

GRAND DRAW PRIZES IN 4 AREAS*	DRAW DATE	DEADLINE OF ENTRIES
First Prize : P500,000 Second Prize : 200,000 Third Prize : 50,000 15 Consolation Prizes of P10,000 each : 150,000	April 27, 2001	April 20, 2001

*Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao and GMA.
PROMO STARTS JAN. 1, 2001 AND ENDS APRIL 27, 2001. DOH BFAD Permit No. 0494 s. 2000.

Artists condemn bomb attacks

THE CONCERNED Artists of the Philippines (CAP) has joined people's organizations and cause-oriented groups in condemning the spate of bombings on Saturday, which claimed the lives of 14 people and injured scores of innocent civilians.

In a statement, CAP said it is putting the responsibility squarely on the Estrada regime, "that despite its huge intelligence funds and a cornucopia of security gadgets and devices, it had again failed to protect the people from terrorist attacks."

"Obviously, Estrada and his cohorts have not realized the importance of complementing these material advantages with God-given, natural intelligence and compassion," CAP said.

"With Estrada's dismal human rights and militarist record, it is not hard to believe that the bombings are the handiwork of Estrada himself—to terrorize the mass movement, to stop the impeachment process and to hold on to power."

CAP also reaffirmed its stand for the ouster of Mr. Estrada whom they described to be immoral, incompetent and corrupt. It said the President's ouster could either be by resignation or impeachment, if not by direct peaceful people's action.

"We commend artists and cultural workers who have dedicated their lives and works for the development of relevant, progressive and nationalist arts and culture, who have the courage to join and participate in rallies, and who have in one way or another contributed their talents in the pursuit of truth and justice," said CAP.

It also urged concerned artists to get involved in nationalist endeavors and join the ranks of multisectoral formations in their struggle to oust Mr. Estrada and in their advocacy for good government.

Merchants make money from anti-Erap fever

By Agnes E. Donato

VENDORS of anti-Erap novelty items have found brisk business during mass actions against President Estrada. And ralliers are finding out that shopping in the instant booths of these vendors is a bargain in these days of galloping inflation.

The booths set up by various cause-oriented groups sell a wide variety of anti-Erap shirts, music albums, pins and stickers for low prices.

Shirts are sold for P100 or P150 and pins cost P35 each.

A P5 discount is given if three pins are bought.

ID holders are P25 each while 2.5-inch-by-8-inch stickers cost P5 each.

The protest paraphernalia come in so many colors, sizes and designs, and feature President Estrada in almost all of them.

Emily Garcia of the Graffiti Art and Design, which distributes the protest items, said the most saleable among the shirts is the "Shut Down Erap."

The shirt has the image of a computer screen in front and the question "What do you want to do with Erap?"

Four choices are also provided—resign, be ousted, be hit by lightning and none of the above.

Garcia said most militant groups like Karapatan and Desaparecidos, as well as some individuals, have also been helping the Graffiti group in selling the items.

In return, they get 10 percent of their total sales.

Despite the money the Graffiti group is making from the protest items, Garcia said its members still wish that the President would resign.

"This is not only a business for us," she said. "It also provides us with a way to inform people about our political stand while helping other groups raise funds for their campaigns."

She said the group had already been selling political items since last year.

"It just so happened that the Estrada-resign campaign became a hit, and people keep on buying," Garcia said.

More severe penalty for looting sought

TAKING advantage of the misfortunes of others is one of the basest forms of criminality and thus must be punished more severely than what the existing law prescribes, according to Bohol Rep. Ernesto Herrera.

The former senator has filed House Bill No. 643, which seeks to impose stiffer penalties for certain instances of qualified theft or looting, which is rampant during natural disasters and emergencies and in the aftermath of crimes.

The Revised Penal Code prescribes penalties for qualified theft based on the value of the property stolen.

Herrera, however, says the value of the property is immaterial. "Looting is an act that any humane and civilized society will consider repugnant," he said.

He proposes to amend Article 310 of the Revised Penal Code, recommending the penalty of 17 years in prison up to life imprisonment if the property is taken in the following situations:

- during a fire, earthquake, typhoon, volcanic eruption, flood or any other calamity;
- during a civil disruption or disturbance, public want or emergency; and,
- in accidents involving land, sea and air transport.

The penalty shall also apply if the property is taken from people in distress or victims of a crime committed by another person, such as in a bank robbery.

If the offender is a police officer or a person whose duty is to render assistance during emergencies, such as firemen, the penalty shall be life imprisonment.

"Our bill is an affirmation that as far as Philippine society is concerned, there can be no excuse or justification for a human being stealing the property of his fellow human being in times of the latter's misfortune," Herrera says.

"It should further emphasize our revulsion at what is inherently wrong and our unwavering conviction that this criminal act must not only go unpunished, but that it must be punished severely."

Tondo guard kills man

A MAN who tried to invite a security guard to drink with him was shot and killed reportedly by accident during a scuffle with the watchman in Tondo, Manila on Saturday night.

Killed was Mario Ocidental, 32, a resident of Luzon Street, Tondo, Manila.

Ocidental died while undergoing surgery at the Metropolitan Hospital in Sta. Cruz, Manila, said the case officer, SPO1 Virgo Villareal of the Western Police District homicide section.

Villareal said the suspect, Edwin Dallegos, 27, an agent of the Orion Security Agency and detailed at Dionisio Building on Luzon Street, was at his post in the building when Ocidental, allegedly drunk, approached him and offered him a glass of gin at about 9:30 p.m. Saturday.

Dallegos refused Ocidental's offer, saying he was still on duty.

Ocidental reportedly splashed the gin on the security guard, and a fistfight ensued.

The guard claimed Ocidental was trying to grab his .38-caliber service revolver from its holster when the gun fell and fired, hitting Ocidental on the left side of the chest.

The security guard yielded himself to the police after the shooting.

Chief Insp. Juanito Taluban, homicide section chief, said Dallegos would not be charged if it could be proven that the shooting was an accident.

Jerome Aning

Erap blamed . . .

(From page A15)

Now there are Giordano, Picachu, bombshell and Starmaker.

The frog-shaped Giordano, patterned after the garment brand's logo, and Picachu, from the popular Japanese cartoon character, combine the features of sparklers, crying cows and fountains. Each is worth P300 to P500.

A bombshell is loaded in a cannon made of cardboard. It sparkles upon explosion in the air. Each costs P300 to P700.

Starmakers are those used in fireworks displays at the Enchanted Kingdom in Laguna. Prices range from P950 to P3,800.

Thanksgiving

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

OUR New Year's day table is a happy mix of borrowed appetites and old wishes.

On New Year's Eve, that great pig's leg, its sweet fat covered by a mantle of toasted sugar, would be there, the main fare, for everybody to share.

The ham, courtesy of our Spanish grandfathers, was obviously meant to ensure plenty in the kitchen all year round; although it could also symbolize a deeper family wish for togetherness.

Unlike today, though, the old ham would not come in cooked and ready to eat.

Immediately after Christmas day, father would come home lugging that leg of uncooked ham, preferably of the Hoc-shu variety. It was held by a loose red net, wrapped in a thick, oily sheet of manila paper and somewhat smelling of damp, unwashed socks.

Come Dec. 31, mother would start boiling the lardy, uncooked meat early in the morning. It was a long, tedious process. Water and a big can of pineapple juice would be poured over the ham, now lying in a *talyasi*, and chunks of firewood would burn slowly under the steel vat, all the way to the afternoon, until the desired tenderness was achieved.

***

I remember mother later wielding a piece of flat iron, made fiery red after minutes over the embers, to toast the sugar strewn all over the fatty side of pig's leg.

It was one of the sweetest scents of the holidays that I continue to miss.

Other than its nice smell, the holiday ham also looked delicious and succulent, what with oil and melted sugar dripping over it.

But although young and hungry, you could not finish more than one helping. All because, year after year, the taste of that great Chinese ham had never changed. It was unbelievably salty.

One ham sandwich, eaten with a thick creamy cup of Hershey's chocolate, should be more than enough to usher in the New Year.

Thank God there were the assorted fruits, grapes, apples, and oranges to punctuate the very special feast.

We had stopped wondering. But shortly before dinner on each New Year's Day, mother and father, dressed for a grand ball, would go out on a date. They often watched a first-class movie in a downtown theater.

As soon as our parents had stepped out, relatives from the province, mainly Hagonoy, Bulacan, would call in and join us for dinner. The fare consisted mainly of *nilagang manok* and, yes, ham.

We never had ready, wrapped gifts items for these late-coming aunts and uncles. But, just the same, they would lavish us with thanks after having helped themselves to the stack of cheap, dark-colored bottled perfume regularly provided to us by Chinese friends in the nearby Choan Huat factory.

Yes, it would take another year before the next ham would come along.

But, mind you, the New Year ham itself would be with us for quite sometime, its bits or bones landing in the *ginisang mongo*, or swimming with the *pechay* in the beef or chicken broth.

***

Nothing has changed basically.

Unfortunately, some godless people overdid themselves and exploded killer bombs around Metro Manila shortly before the end of the old year.

Merriment would be mixed with fear and mourning as we ushered in the New Year.

But National Artist Nick Joaquin remembers his dear, old Manila where city folk clattered tin cans and exploded firecrackers, while keeping a watch over the clock and asking each other if it was midnight already.

Added Mr. Joaquin: "Then finally came the unmistakable roar of the ice plant's whistle, and from Manila Bay came the answering clamor of the US Navy's foghorns and whistles, and then the pealing of the bells from the city's churches while people, dancing on the streets at Plaza Sta. Cruz or at the Sta. Ana Cabaret, took up the cry and swelled it as, on and on, for a full hour, the ice plant's whistle sounded and resounded."

Just like before, December ended last night.

Another year has begun.

***

Anyway, during my boyhood, we would be allowed on New Year's Eve to just roam and roam. There were no early curfews unlike on all the other days of the year.

All we had to do was walk in before the clock could strike 12.

So we walked the length of town, carefree, tireless, unmindful of any hazards, as we happily observed people go about their frenzied ways of welcoming the New Year.

Then exactly at midnight, with all the bedlam and merrymaking around, we would gather around in deep prayer.

The New Year *media noche*, mainly the ham, was obviously meant to keep us together very, very long, if not forever.

Funny, but if we had celebrated the coming of the New Year by feasting on one whole pig instead, most members of the family would have not been uprooted like a leg of ham. As it is now, most of our loved ones now reside with their families in the United States, thousands of miles away from the old holiday table.

We only have our appetites to blame for the dismemberment and the crisis we are in.

It's become clear that, in going for the popular but untested, we've ended up with a weak, useless President.

Still, we have to thank God that, despite the bombs, the wild appetite of the man on top of this lost government, we were able to usher in the New Year in one piece.

EDWIN BACASMAS

SCAVENGERS keep on working on what may be their last day at the San Mateo landfill even as MMDA workers start fumigating the dump.

BEAUTY'S BLESSINGS

Beauty expert Ricky Reyes distributes presents to poor children on Gypson Street in Barangay Highway Hills in Mandaluyong City. Beside Reyes is Menchie Abalos, president of the Kababaihan Kakaiba ng Mandaluyong.

San Mateo celebrates . . .

(From page A15)

group has opposed requests for another extension of the landfill's use until the government could find a suitable alternative dump.

Regalado said she found the Rizal people's victory "very sweet."

"We fought for this for about five years," she said. "Up to the last minute, some of our members are doubtful if Secretary Aventajado would actually come to announce the closure. But he did, and we consider this as a victory of the people."

The CCLC also vowed during a short program that they would burn any dump truck that would dare dispose garbage at the San Mateo Landfill after its closure.

During the celebration, Aventajado, who was an hour late, distributed to the residents 2001 calendars with his autograph and his picture. He also admitted he is thinking of running for senator.

Even if the deadline for garbage disposal at the landfill was yesterday, Aventajado announced its closure a day earlier, drawing wild cheer from the residents.

But Aventajado, who also chairs the Greater Metropolitan Manila Solid Waste Management Committee, did not reveal where Metro Manila garbage would be dumped when garbage collection resumes on Jan. 2.

He is pushing for the use of an area in Semirara Island in Antique as an interim dumpsite, but Antique officials and residents have strongly opposed his proposal because of environmental concerns.

"I assure Metro Manila residents that their trash will be brought somewhere," Aventajado said. "I just can't tell the exact place because of certain temporary restraining orders and injunctions."

Rebecca Ynares, who will run for the post to be vacated by her husband, Rizal Gov. Casimiro Ynares, admitted that she had not been visible the past week because she was afraid the residents would vent their anger on her if the landfill closure did not take place.

But it did, and Ynares turned it into a campaign opportunity for herself distributing her and her husband's photographs to the people.

"I've actually been telling the governor that if this landfill were not closed, I'd go to the streets and stage a picket myself," Ynares said.

Antipolo Rep. Vic Sumulong also expressed relief at the closure of the landfill and congratulated his constituents on their victory.

He then sang some upbeat songs with the band as the residents danced away the long wait for Aventajado.

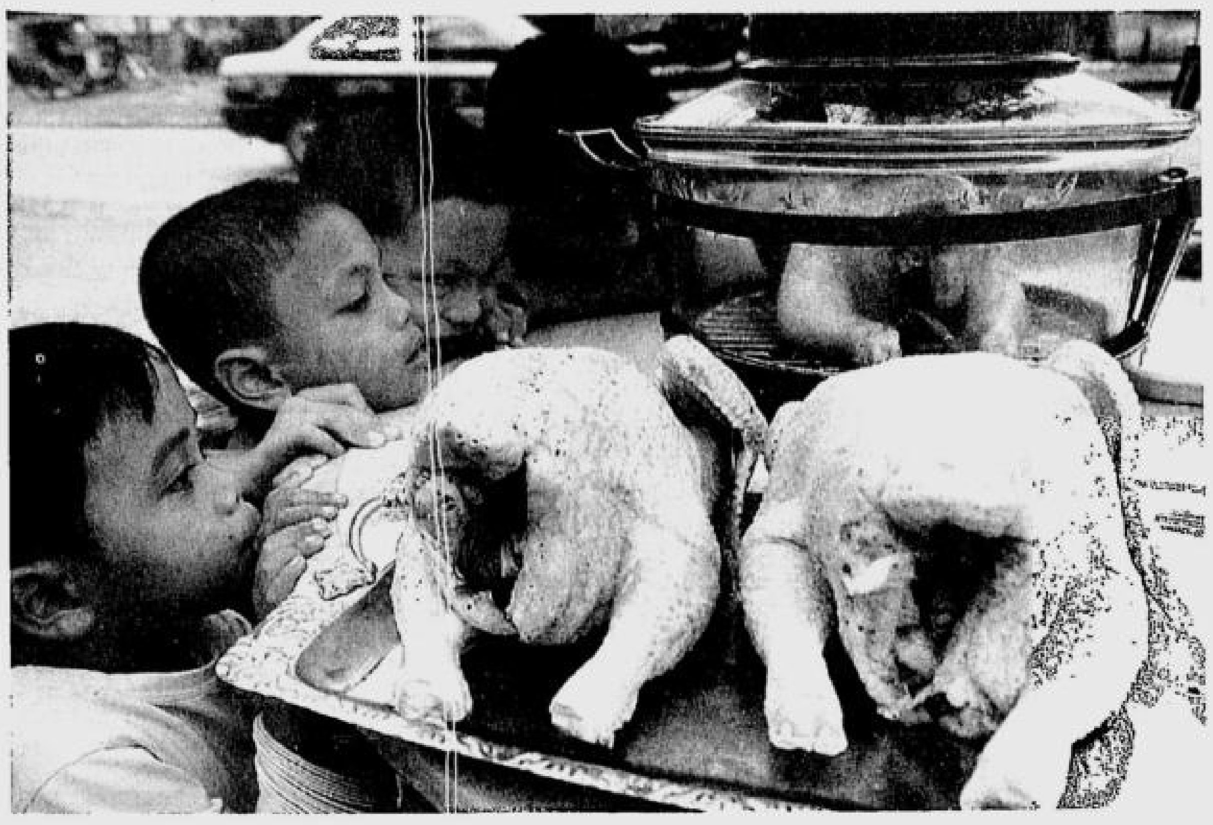
A-Homes spokesperson Ely Kasilag did not mind much if politicians seemed to be using the issue on the landfill closure to earn "pogi points" for themselves.

"It is fine with me because the Rizaleños are the beneficiaries," Kasilag said. "This is the best Christmas gift that anybody could ever give us and we are very thankful for that."

He earlier accused Governor Ynares of receiving about P120 million in carrot money from the national government, in exchange for an extension of the landfill operation.

But not everybody is happy with the closure of the 73-hectare dumpsite, which employs people in the vicinity for maintenance of the landfill and supervision of the dump trucks.

Residents of Barangay Pintong Bukawe in San Mateo and the surrounding sitios of Antipolo pleaded with the government to consider their livelihood.



BACK VIEW

Four boys get a close-up view of stuffed chicken cooking in a turbo broiler at a store on Kalayaan Avenue in Quezon City the morning of New Year's Eve. Watching may be the closest they can come to food like this, even on such an important day. JOAN BONDOC

'Produce Dacer'

CAVITE Gov. Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr. last week repeated his offer of P1 million for anyone who could give information that would lead to the finding of press relations man Salvador "Bubby" Dacer who has been missing for more than a month now.

Revilla, who expressed hope Dacer is still alive, is one of the PR man's clients.

Dacer and his driver Manuel Corbito were reportedly abducted by unidentified men on Nov. 24.

Three days later, Dacer's white Toyota Revo was found in a ravine in Barangay Mabato in Maragondon, Cavite.

"The family of Bubby (Dacer) has suffered much," Revilla said. "Let us not prolong their agony by continually hiding their father."

He said that the continued disappearance of Dacer is not doing any good to the people's confidence in our institutions.

DACER

REVILLA

Dacer's disappearance is also an affront to the freedom of the press, he added.

"We need freedom of the press for a healthy and working democracy," the governor said. "The press serves as a fiscalizer of the government and other institutions.

"We need the press for people to continue believing in them," Revilla added.

He said finding Dacer would be a great service to the country.

Jeepney amok kills passenger

A PIER worker was killed while two other men were injured after an alleged drug dependent ran amuck and shot at jeepney passengers in Tondo, Manila before dawn on Friday.

Police said the curious glances of the other jeepney passengers might have irked pedicab driver Vincent Bona, 18, a resident of Perla Street, Tondo.

Killed was Jovenor Estoy, 38, a resident of Sawata Street, Maypajo, Caloocan City, who took a bullet below the left armpit.

Chief Insp. Juanito Taluban, head of the Western Police District homicide section, said the shooting took place minutes after Bona flagged a Caloocan-bound jeepney at the corner of Pritil and Juan Luna streets in Tondo about 2 p.m.

Witnesses told police that Bona appeared fidgety and kept glancing at the other passengers. They said he began to curse and, without warning, pulled out a .38-caliber revolver and began shooting at the passengers.

"They said the man even praised some of the passengers who had alighted from the jeep because they were spared from the shooting," SPO2 Edgardo Kho told reporters.

The first bullet hit Brigildo Catanino, 22, a resident of Bonifacio Street, Malabon, who was shot on the abdomen and then grazed Joseph Lazaro, 21, of Raxabago Street, Tondo. The second grazed Catanino and then hit Estoy.

The other passengers, including the driver, jumped out of the jeepney and called for help. Policemen caught Bona, who had fired all his bullets, in the jeepney.

Kho said Bona was a drug addict and a notorious trouble-maker in Pritil, Tondo.

Estoy was brought to the Martinez Medical Center but he was pronounced dead on arrival. The others were treated at the Gat Andres Bonifacio Memorial Medical Center.

Bona is detained at the WPD Integrated Jail. He will be charged with homicide and three counts of frustrated homicide.

Jerome Aning

Bring back glory and investors to QC, says solon

QUEZON City Rep. Dante V. Liban yesterday batted for a program to generate jobs, attract capital and bring back investors to Quezon City.

Liban pointed out that 50 percent of the city's residents belong to the so-called marginalized or disadvantaged sector.

He called on the Quezon City government to give residents priority in filling up job vacancies in the city, whether in the government or in the private sector.

He said one area that the Quezon City government could focus on is the provision of low-cost, socialized housing.

"This program will not only lessen the number of squatters in the city but also give many people much-needed employment, from engineers to blue-collar workers," he said.

The provision of massive low-cost, socialized housing projects "has been proven to spur at least 70 industries, from the first nail to the last coat of paint," he said. "Each beneficiary-industry will then create job opportunities for countless residents of the city who are now unemployed.

"Quezon City's political leaders should not only work at making the city the country's entertainment capital. They should also bring back the glory that Quezon City enjoyed when it was the country's capital. A workable program to bring back businessmen and investors must be seriously implemented."

4-story fall kills watchman

A SECURITY guard who was reportedly drunk died after falling from the third floor of a mall in Divisoria, Manila late Wednesday night.

The guard was identified as Virgilio Juliano, 30, an agent of Right Force Security Agency assigned at the Bingo Filipino on the third level of the Prime Block Mall at the Tutuban Center.

SPO1 Virgio Villareal of the Western Police District homicide section said Juliano, a resident of Sto. Cristo St. Extension, and his superior, shift-in-charge Carlos Fernando, reportedly drank gin while they were on duty at 8 p.m. Wednesday.

After drinking, the guards went back to their posts. Fernando said that about 11 p.m., he went to urinate in the comfort room and saw Juliano standing in front of the railing at Bingo Filipino.

Fernando said he later heard the loud screams of the guards posted on the ground floor. He said he noticed that Juliano was no longer in his place.

Juliano suffered a cracked skull and other bone injuries, police said. He was brought to the Metropolitan Hospital but was declared dead on arrival.

Jerome Aning

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Outstanding entries, lackluster awards night

(From page A22)

But why did presenters have to rattle off all the film titles (yes, even those earlier cited third and second best) when the time came to reveal the very best? What a waste of airtime, unless a film wins a second, even a third time as Best Picture in one night.

This year's crop of entries may be the best we've seen in recent history, but the awards night lacked the spark of film festivals past.

Save for Dolphy, Rudy Fernandez, Lorna Tolentino, Gloria Romero and Eddie Garcia, no other big names graced the affair.

Christopher, Hilda and Patrick Garcia were no-shows. In their absence were young hopefuls Jericho Rosales, Marvin Agustin, Janet McBride, Angelika de la Cruz and angel-faced Cogie Domingo.

Second best

Heads turned as G Toengi came in the arms of a leather-clad Jeffrey. Dressed in a hairy black gown with a plunging neckline, G joined the Quizons—Dolphy, Zsa Zsa, Eric and Vandolph—at their table.

For her efforts, she was later cited as Lipovitan's "Ira" Lady. But the usually daring G suddenly became conscious on-stage, covering her chest with a piece of cardboard as she thanked organizers.

After winning Best Picture two years in a row ("Jose Rizal" and "Muro-Ami"), GMA Films had to settle for second this year. "Deathrow" lost to Star Cinema's "Tanging Yaman." This didn't stop GMA Films' big boss Butch Jimenez from staying behind with his stars. Eddie, as usual, came with longtime partner Lilibeth.

Trust relentless fans to find a way. Despite the tight security, Angge, a former comedienne in charge of production, was furious at the number of peo-ple who slipped through the PICC Reception Hall.

Fans and phones

Fans, with instamatic cameras, had a field day posing with their favorite stars. Jericho, Angelika and Cogie were more than happy to oblige. With no Vilma Santos and Nora Aunor competing for awards, fans were unusually sedate that night.

Despite pleas from the show's producers for people to turn off their cell phones, teen stars such as Jericho, Janet and Carol were busy texting friends throughout the show. Talk about setting a good example.

Like their idols, fans were also feverishly texting the latest results to family and friends. The show was shown on TV in a delayed telecast. If anything, the cell phone proved to be the great equalizer between ordinary people and show biz denizens.

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2	DOLBY SURROUND	SUGATANG PUSO
3	DOLBY DIGITAL	PING LACSON STORY
4	DOLBY SURROUND	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
5	DOLBY DIGITAL EX	DEATH ROW
6	DOLBY SURROUND	TANGING YAMAN
7	DOLBY SURROUND	PING LACSON STORY
8	DOLBY SURROUND	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY

SM CENTERPOINT 7149522 • 7161416

1	DOLBY SURROUND	SPIRIT WARRIORS
2	DOLBY SURROUND	SUGATANG PUSO
3	DTS	PING LACSON STORY
4	DOLBY SURROUND	DEATH ROW
5	DOLBY DIGITAL	TANGING YAMAN
6	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
7	DOLBY SURROUND	SUGATANG PUSO
8	DOLBY SURROUND	PING LACSON STORY
9	DOLBY SURROUND	DEATH ROW
10	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY

SM CITY FAIRVIEW 9350749

1	DOLBY SURROUND	TANGING YAMAN
2	DOLBY SURROUND	SUGATANG PUSO
3	DOLBY SURROUND	PING LACSON STORY
4	DOLBY DIGITAL	DEATH ROW
5	DOLBY SURROUND	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
6	DOLBY SURROUND	SPIRIT WARRIORS
7	DOLBY DIGITAL	TANGING YAMAN
8	DOLBY SURROUND	SUGATANG PUSO
9	DOLBY SURROUND	PING LACSON STORY
10	DOLBY SURROUND	DEATH ROW
11	DOLBY SURROUND	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
12	DOLBY SURROUND	SPIRIT WARRIORS

SM CITY MANILA 5239240

1	DOLBY DIGITAL	TANGING YAMAN
2	DOLBY DIGITAL	DEATH ROW
3	DOLBY SURROUND	SPIRIT WARRIORS
4	DOLBY SURROUND	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
5	DOLBY DIGITAL	SUGATANG PUSO
6	DOLBY DIGITAL EX	TANGING YAMAN
7	DOLBY SURROUND	PING LACSON STORY
8	DOLBY SURROUND	DEATH ROW
9	DOLBY SURROUND	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
10	DOLBY SURROUND	SPIRIT WARRIORS
11	DOLBY SURROUND	PING LACSON STORY
12	DOLBY SURROUND	SUGATANG PUSO

GUADALUPE COMM'L CTR 8820950

1	ULTRA SURROUND	PING LACSON STORY
2	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	SPIRIT WARRIORS
3	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	SUGATANG PUSO

SM MEGAMALL 6331901 • 6329401

1	DOLBY DIGITAL	TANGING YAMAN
2	DOLBY SURROUND	SPIRIT WARRIORS
3	DOLBY DIGITAL	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
4	DTS	DEATH ROW
5	DOLBY SURROUND	SUGATANG PUSO
6	DOLBY SURROUND	PING LACSON STORY
7	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	DEATH ROW
8	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	SPIRIT WARRIORS
9	DOLBY SURROUND	PING LACSON STORY
10	DOLBY SURROUND	TANGING YAMAN
11	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	SUGATANG PUSO
12	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY

SM CITY NORTH EDSA 9295452

1	DOLBY SURROUND	SPIRIT WARRIORS
2	DOLBY SURROUND	PING LACSON STORY
3	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	SUGATANG PUSO
4	DOLBY SURROUND	TANGING YAMAN
5	DOLBY SURROUND	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
6	DOLBY SURROUND	SPIRIT WARRIORS
7	DTS	DEATH ROW
8	DOLBY DIGITAL	PING LACSON STORY
9	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	TANGING YAMAN
10	DOLBY SURROUND	SUGATANG PUSO
11	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	DEATH ROW
12	DOLBY SURROUND	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY

SM SOUTHMALL 8066888 • 8066782

1	ULTRA SURROUND	PING LACSON STORY
2	ULTRA SURROUND	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
3	DOLBY DIGITAL EX	TANGING YAMAN
4	ULTRA SURROUND	DEATH ROW
5	ULTRA SURROUND	SPIRIT WARRIORS
6	ULTRA SURROUND	DEATH ROW
7	ULTRA SURROUND	SPIRIT WARRIORS
8	DOLBY DIGITAL EX	SUGATANG PUSO
9	ULTRA SURROUND	TANGING YAMAN
10	ULTRA SURROUND	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY

TUTUBAN CENTER 2514302

1	ULTRA SURROUND	TANGING YAMAN
2	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	DEATH ROW
3	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
4	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	SUGATANG PUSO

SM CEBU 2313876

1	DOLBY SURROUND	UNBREAKABLE
2	ULTRA SURROUND	BAWAT HAKBANG PANGANIB
3	ULTRA SURROUND	SPIRIT WARRIORS
4	ULTRA SURROUND	TANGING YAMAN
5	ULTRA SURROUND	PING LACSON STORY
6	ULTRA SURROUND	JUAN & TED
7	DOLBY SURROUND	BRING IT ON

SM ILOILO 3209422

1	ULTRA SURROUND	TANGING YAMAN
2	ULTRA SURROUND	UNBREAKABLE
3	ULTRA SURROUND	ABANDONADA
4	ULTRA SURROUND	THE GRINCH
5	ULTRA SURROUND	PING LACSON STORY
6	ULTRA SURROUND	CHARLIE'S ANGELS
7	ULTRA SURROUND	THE REPLACEMENTS
8	ULTRA SURROUND	SPIRIT WARRIORS

SM PAMPANGA 7128015

1	DOLBY DIGITAL EX	DEATH ROW
2	DOLBY DIGITAL EX	SPIRIT WARRIORS
3	DOLBY SURROUND	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
4	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	SUGATANG PUSO
5	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	TANGING YAMAN
6	DOLBY SURROUND	PING LACSON STORY

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3. THE GRINCH
4. READY TO RUMBLE
5. JUAN & TED
6. LARO SA BAGA

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ALI MALL CINEPLEX-3 (DDS)	SPIRIT WARRIORS
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-4 (SDDS)	MARKOVA
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-5 (DTS)	SUGATANG PUSO
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-6 (DOLBY)	SPIRIT WARRIORS
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-7 (DOLBY)	PING LACSON STORY
FARMERS PLAZA-1 (DOLBY)	TANGING YAMAN
FARMERS PLAZA-2 (DOLBY)	DEATH ROW
FIESTA CARNIVAL	SUGATANG PUSO
NEW FRONTIER	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
MANILA	
EASTERN	
MAXIM	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
MIRAMAR	SUGATANG PUSO
ODEON	TANGING YAMAN
ODEON-2	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
ROBEN	SPIRIT WARRIORS
TANDEM-1	SPIRIT WARRIORS
TANDEM-2	NAGHUHUMIYAW
TIMES	KAILANGAN KO'Y IKAW / BIYAHENG LANGIT
QUEZON CITY	
ACT-1	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
ACT-2	IKAW LAMANG
ACT-3	CLASS AGAIN
ACT-4	KAAGAW
CORONET-2	DEATH ROW
QUEZON-1	DEATH ROW
REMAR	TANGING YAMAN
REMAR-2	SPIRIT WARRIORS
CUBAO	
OCEAN SUPERAMA	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
OCEAN CINEMA-A	LARO SA BAGA
OCEAN CINEMA-B	GUEVARRA
MANDALUYONG CITY	
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CINEMA-1	CLOSED TODAY
CINEMA-2	CLOSED TODAY
CAINTA RIZAL	
STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-54091 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	SPIRIT WARRIORS
CINEMA-2	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
CINEMA-3	SUGATANG PUSO
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	DEATH ROW
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	TANGING YAMAN
CINEMA-6	PING LACSON STORY
CINEMA-7	SPIRIT WARRIORS
CINEMA-8	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	SUGATANG PUSO
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	DEATH ROW
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	TANGING YAMAN
CINEMA-12	PING LACSON STORY
CINEMA-14	DEATH ROW
CINEMA-15	TANGING YAMAN
LORES	
CINEMA-2	SPIRIT WARRIORS
CINEMA-3	SUGATANG PUSO
POWER PLANT CINEMA	
CINEMA-1	DEATH ROW
CINEMA-2	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
CINEMA-3	SUGATANG PUSO
CINEMA-4	TANGING YAMAN
CINEMA-5	SPIRIT WARRIORS
CINEMA-6	TANGING YAMAN

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1	DEATH ROW
2	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
3	SUGATANG PUSO
4	TANGING YAMAN

All Digital Sounds
GLORIETTA 4

1	PING LACSON STORY	In DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
2	TANGING YAMAN	In DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
3	SPIRIT WARRIORS THX	in DSD/SDDS/DTS DIGITAL SOUND
4	SUGATANG PUSO Art Film	In DTS DIGITAL SOUND
5	DEATH ROW	In DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
6	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY	In DTS/SDDS DIGITAL SOUND
7	SPIRIT WARRIORS	In DTS DIGITAL SOUND

GREENBELT

1	TANGING YAMAN	in DOLBY STEREO DIGITAL SOUND
2	DEATH ROW	in SONY DYNAMIC DIGITAL SOUND
3	PING LACSON STORY	In DOLBY STEREO DIGITAL SOUND
4	SOON TO OPEN Onstage	

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3	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY	in DTS DIGITAL SOUND
4	PING LACSON STORY	in DTS DIGITAL SOUND
5	TANGING YAMAN	In DTS DIGITAL SOUND

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5	TANGING YAMAN
6	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
7	SPIRIT WARRIORS
8	DEATH ROW
9	PING LACSON STORY
10	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY

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3	TANGING YAMAN
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7	PING LACSON STORY
8	TANGING YAMAN

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4	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
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6	DEATH ROW

Uniwide Coastal Mall (Parañaque) tel 879.0001 loc. 2152

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3	DEATH ROW
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4	SPIRIT WARRIORS
5	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
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7	TANGING YAMAN
8	PING LACSON STORY
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4	
5	
6	

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7	PING LACSON STORY
8	TANGING YAMAN
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3	TANGING YAMAN
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6	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
7	SPIRIT WARRIORS
8	PING LACSON STORY

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3	SPIRIT WARRIORS

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5	TANGING YAMAN

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2	PING LACSON STORY
3	TANGING YAMAN
4	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
5	SUGATANG PUSO
6	DEATH ROW

Baclaran LRT Cinema tel 512.0115 or 512.0116

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3	PING LACSON STORY

Cinema 2000 Waltermart (Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383

1	PING LACSON STORY
2	TANGING YAMAN
3	DEATH ROW
4	SPIRIT WARRIORS

Lianas Cinema (Alabang) tel 850.1276

1	TANGING YAMAN
2	PING LACSON STORY
3	DEATH ROW
4	SPIRIT WARRIORS

Lianas MovieCity (Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202

1	PING LACSON STORY
2	SPIRIT WARRIORS
3	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
4	DEATH ROW
5	TANGING YAMAN

Olivarez Tri-Cinema (Biñan) tel (049) 511.8883

1	TANGING YAMAN
2	SPIRIT WARRIORS
3	DEATH ROW

Olivarez Los Baños tel (049) 536.5101

1	DEATH ROW
2	SPIRIT WARRIORS
3	TANGING YAMAN

Olivarez Tagaytay tel (046) 413.0321

1	PING LACSON STORY
2	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
3	TANGING YAMAN

Morales Cinema (Biñan) tel (049) 511.9736

1	PING LACSON STORY
2	SPIRIT WARRIORS
3	SUGATANG PUSO

Cabuyao (Laguna City) tel (049) 243.2783

1	DEATH ROW
2	TANGING YAMAN

Fourstep (Cavite) tel (046) 416.2385

1	DEATH ROW

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1	SUGATANG PUSO
2	SPIRIT WARRIORS
3	TANGING YAMAN

Fiesta World Mall (Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790

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2	PING LACSON STORY
3	DEATH ROW
4	TANGING YAMAN

Berma tel 879.2168

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2	PING LACSON STORY

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2	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
3	SUGATANG PUSO
4	SPIRIT WARRIORS

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3	PING LACSON STORY
4	SPIRIT WARRIORS

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Action-drama as biography

AS its title suggests "Ping Lacson, Supercop" is out to present its controversial protagonist as a practically invincible crimefighter. It succeeds in achieving that "action-hero" objective, but ends up begging the question in relation to the less sterling aspects of the title character's life and work.

It does allow for some "feet of clay" revelations, but most of them have to do with **Lacson**'s flirtations with the ladies. Instead of making him less incredibly heroic, however, this even adds to his "stature," because action heroes in these parts are expected to be as quick and deadly with their charm as they are with their fists.

And so it is that "Supercop" takes us from one breathtaking criminal case to another, all of them cleverly and courageously cracked by Lacson.

After a while, the flurry of achievements acquires a surreal quality, as the action scenes occur seemingly without a realistic context, and all of them culminate in triumph for Lacson, who personally leads all of the attacks and raids, and yet survives most of them with nary a scratch.

This subliminally tells viewers that here is a man who is blessed by the gods of peace and order—and honesty and justice, for good measure—so, how can we doubt his fealty to his cause, and how can we question any of his actuations?

All this is par for the course for action-dramas, but this one has biography added to the equation, and when filmmakers are dealing with a real person's life, they should be less escapist and uncritical in their approach.

Since Lacson is a controversial figure, viewers expect a film made on his life to squarely face the issues related to him.

Instead, the movie makes the usual noises about how misunderstood he is, and how people who want to silence him or render him powerless to expose crime and corruption, will do anything to poison the public's mind against him.

In terms of action highlights, **Toto Natividad**'s movie isn't found wanting. But some of them happen so quickly that they don't provide the context needed by viewers to make sense out of them, beyond their merely action-movie resonances.

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

Limited by the film's "superhero" approach, the performances in it lack true grit and emotional pertinence. Even the potentially affective boss-sidekick relationship between Lacson and a junior officer played by **Herbert Bautista** doesn't reach a sufficiently high emotional peak when the officer is killed in an encounter.

As for **Rudy Fernandez**, we initially like his attempt to look, sound and move like Lacson, but his superhero stance in his action scenes ends up making his characterization predictable.

For her part, **Lorna Tolentino** makes Lacson's wife a tough and sassy character in one scene, but she soon reverts to a bland, trusting and "supportive" stance in her other scenes.

Clearly, "Ping Lacson, Supercop" banks on its considerable strengths as an action film, so more humanizing elements play only second fiddle to its fight and chase scenes. That's too bad because, for all of the movie's "revelations," its protagonist remains blithely shrouded in mystery.

January blockbusters

THE NATIONAL Geographic Channel kicks of the new TV year with an exciting showcase of "Saturday Unlimited" blockbusters.

Tune into "Talons of Terror" (Jan. 6), "Lost Worlds (Jan. 13), "Venom" (Jan. 20), and also to "Secret China (Jan. 27). Join explorers of the outback in "Adventure One" (Jan. 27).

On other days, feel your pulse racing while watching the "Scientific American Frontier" series (Jan. 5 and 12). Join in the search for "The White Elephant" (Jan. 7) and view "In Search of Giants" (Jan. 8). Sail the inland sea in "Desert Lake Venture" (Jan. 13 and 20), and around the world in "The Everest of Sailing" (Jan. 27).

The first "Saturday Unlimited" feature, "Talons of Terror," is about natural killer instincts. Observe how the Crowned Eagle, Falkland Falcon and other predators stalk their helpless prey. And witness the initiation of young eagles into the wilderness.

On ABC-5

AT 8 Tonight, welcome the new year with a big bang as ABC-5's "By Request" features Destiny's Child. The "beauty, brains and talent" foursome recently won Artist of the Year and Hot 100 Singles Artist of the Year honors in the Billboard Awards.

New producers

THE GOOD showing of most of the movies in the current Metro Filmfest has encouraged not just our veteran producers but also some new financiers to try their luck at the film-production game.

The ones we've talked to frankly admit that they're tyros in the game, and they're scared because they've heard that "unconventional business practices" abound in the movie industry.

They want to know how to avoid losing their shirts on their very first venture, and we share the advice we've gotten from veteran producers who want to see new companies flourish on the local movie scene:

Get yourself a good director. Work together with the director to conceptalize a small but interesting story that has a different "hook" or basic element that will distinguish it from other movies.

Have the material fleshed out by a good scriptwriter, always working in tandem with you and the director.

Get at least two stars with some clout at the box office to topbill your film. If their asking price is too high, perhaps the director knows them and can get them to work for less.

Once the script has been finalized, get a relatively honest and reliable production manager and staff.

After the film is completed, make sure that you get a relatively honest distributor or booker to send it through the theater circuit.

If you want to sell your movie abroad, try to get some film festivals interested in it, especially the major ones. Or else, you may have better luck selling your movie to a TV network abroad.

Best of luck!

HERBERT Bautista plays sidekick to Rudy Fernandez's "Lacson" character.

Ai-Ai makes recording waves

CONCORDE Records announces that Ai-Ai de las Alas' self-titled album is fast becoming the toast of music land as proven by its brisk sales in all record outlets nationwide.

Producer Sunny Ilacad believes that the quick response is due to the comedienne-singer's popularity and unique style in pleasing her audience.

Available in CDs and cassettes, the album is sponsored by Angel's Touch Gift Items and Electromat Manufacturing and Recording Corporation.

The album in novelty format, characterizes Ai-Ai's funny, silly, serious and naughty side. With 10 cuts mixed with originals and adaptations, it includes the phenomenal craze, "Feeling Rosalinda" (which is a favorite in the Visayas and Mindanao areas), the danceable "Babay na sa Papa," humorous cuts like "Gusto Kong Tumawa" and "Sumigaw Kang Ai-Ai," the brutal piece, "Dapat Lang Sunugin," Ai-Ai's version of "Nananabik" and the carrier single, "Shhh, I Love You."

Ai-Ai is now busy with promotional mall tours for her album.

DE LAS ALAS

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DEATH ROW 1:30, 3:50, 6:10, 8:30	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY 1:00, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, 10:00	SUGATANG PUSO 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, 8:50
TANGING YAMAN 1:35, 3:45, 6:00, 7:20	SPIRIT WARRIORS 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, 9:50	TANGING YAMAN 12:45, 2:55, 5:10, 7:30, 10:00

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SCHWARZENEGGER
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THE 6TH DAY
PHOENIX

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SASABOG JAN. 4!

Schwarzenegger x2, in '6TH DAY'

Arnold Schwarzenegger visits the future with twice the Action in Columbia Pictures' new high-voltage thriller from the director of James Bond hit TOMORROW NEVER DIES.

The world's No. 1 action star topbills the highest-grossing action movies of all time, including TERMINATOR 1&2, TOTAL RECALL, ERASER, TRUE LIES and END OF DAYS.

In THE 6TH DAY, Schwarzenegger plays an expert fighter pilot wrenched from his family and plunged into a world of murder, corruption and high-tech deception when he is accidentally cloned or duplicated, a "6th day violation."

The multi-million-dollar production features futuristic auto-navigation cars and fighter planes, hair-raising stunts & crashes, and high-tech visual effects as the original Schwarzenegger faces off with the clone Schwarzenegger.

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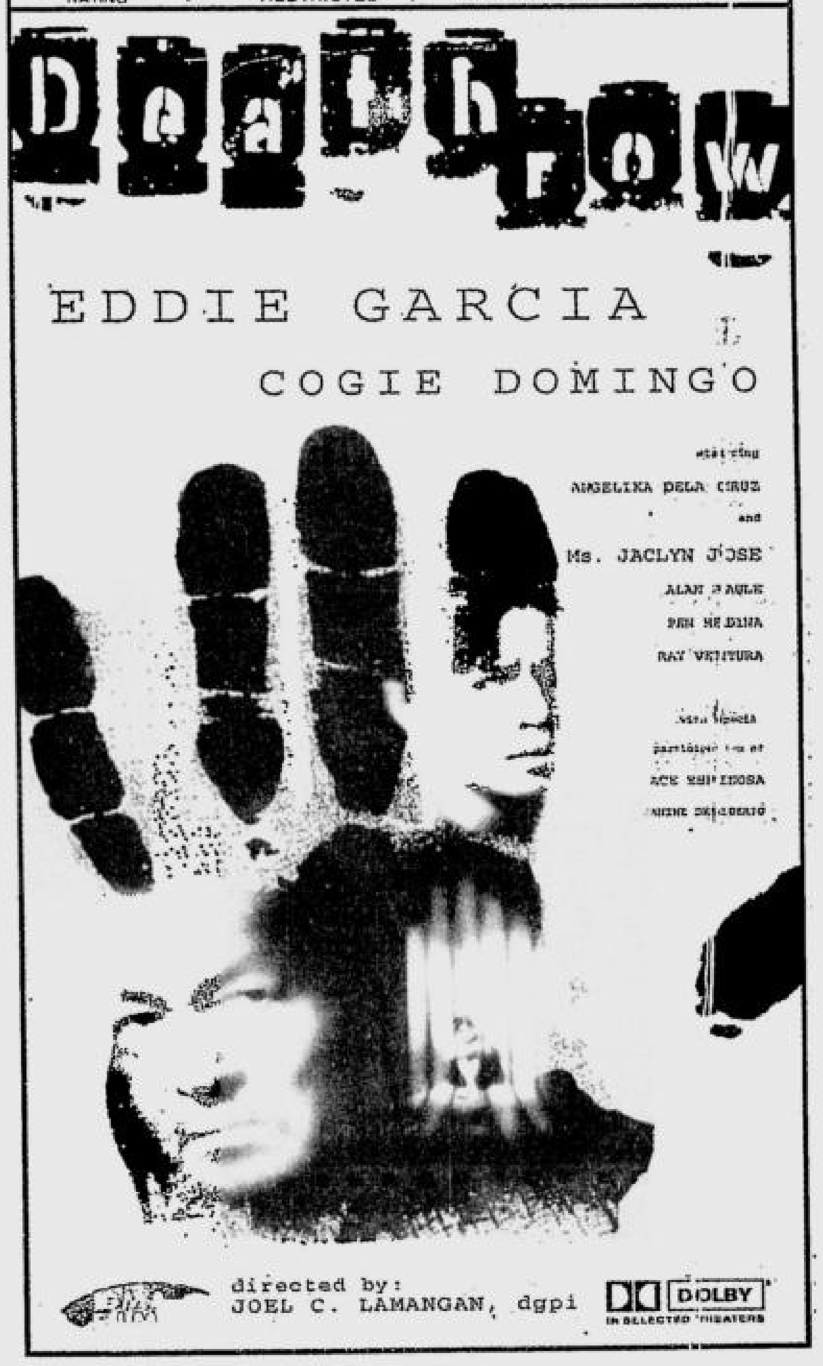

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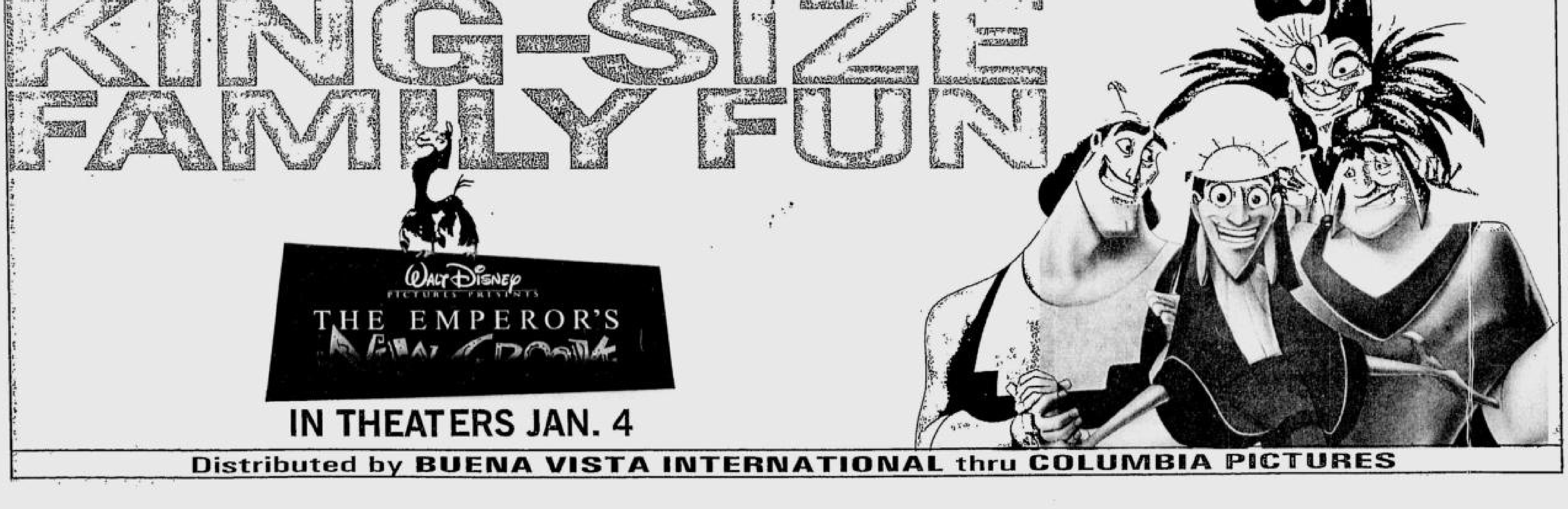

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PHILIPPINE CINEMA 2000

More losers than winners

By Lito B. Zulueta

(Last of two parts)

THERE must be something wrong in an industry that trumpets its efforts to match the standards of world cinema while refusing to recognize bold artistic assays when they do come. What is worse is when stumbling blocks are placed in their path, such as unenlightened censorship and pure political harassment.

It is no wonder that the question of survival in Philippine cinema is an oxymoron, a riddle that defies an answer because the industry's troubles are mainly self-inflicted.

The riddle is especially reflected in the fate that met Gil Portes's **"Markova: Comfort Gay"** and Jeffrey Jeturian's **"Tuhog."** The latter was mercilessly X-rated by a committee of the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board while the former was ignored by the jurors of the Metro Manila Film Festival, who were afflicted either with blindness or homophobia to have missed the merits of the movie.

Together with "Tuhog," "Markova" (RVQ Productions) is the best Filipino film of the year. In the potency of its extraordinary material, the ambitiousness of its attempts to recreate the Japanese occupation and the golden years of Manila vaudeville, the truthfulness and fidelity with which it records the homosexual subculture in Philippine society, and the vigor and poignancy of the performances of its actors, it is easily the movie with the biggest heart so far in the new century.

Like "Tuhog," "Markova" contains that distinct feature of great cinema: surprise. This does not exactly refer to the quality of its material, which is quite sensational as to raise doubts about its self-proclaimed authenticity, doubts which the movie somehow tries to allay and address.

The surprise is the honesty with which it presents and embraces its protagonist, Walter Dempster Jr. a.k.a. Walterina or Markova, who claims to have been raped and abused along with a number of other gay friends by the Japanese imperial soldiers for a prolonged time during the War. The movie peels delicately layer after layer Dempster's very engaging personality through key historical periods.

So much with so little

The surprise is in the fascinating discovery of our history as rendered through the tortuous twists of Dempster's life from his youth to his adulthood and old age. It is a history that is suddenly reeking of familiarity and a little sadness, like an intensely personal photo album suddenly materializing out of the leaden past.

Technically the surprise is on how such a movie with the best intention but with the least resources could have achieved much in recreating the past. From the first frame to the last, "Markova" is engrossing in its reconstitution of the past. The dream sequence at the start effectively situates its narrative line, coming hither and thither in an endless flow that links present to past and past to present.

I can't think of any movie in recent memory that can summon such effective images in a coherent thesis of historical continuity. The dream shows the hoboes and filthy sidewalks of the inner city, Manila in all its faded glory, where in one ghostly abandoned corner walks the young Markova (Eric Quizon) in a flaming red dress, sashaying like the graceful wind, until suddenly he is confronted by Japanese soldiers, their bayonets upturned, pointed toward him, thrusting at him . . .

The horror is relieved when the old Markova (Dolphy) wakes up from his nightmare, to which he will return again and again, either in sleep or in waking state.

Reinventing himself

The oppressive topic is somehow alleviated by the comic touches that never fail to elicit laughter although never detracting from the seriousness of Dempster's harrowing experience in the hands of his Japanese abusers. Dempster himself, if the movie is to believed, has borne the scars of his ordeal with remarkable aplomb, surviving the war with his wits and humor intact.

Part of the joy in watching this movie is seeing how the hero reinvents himself after his tribulation, his appropriation of the name of the Russian dancer Anna Markhova, his rise as a "showgirl," his work as "makeup girl" in Manila's stage shows and movies, and his quiet acceptance of the wages of old age, as he sees his old comrades wasting away with AIDS and the sickness that comes with age, and then only the end of age.

Is Dempster's story fancy, the product of an overwrought imagination? The movie addresses doubts about the veracity of his claims by taking the point of view of the journalist who, in true incredulous fashion, withholds any recognition or endorsement of the story. Dempster himself is presented as too taken with his story as to brook no expression of doubt against it, even the slightest.

Entranced by magic

But clearly the movie has won the audience over to Dempster's side by the time the journalist shows her cold detachment to the story. It has won the audience over because it has presented Dempster as fully human and fully alive, a saint of compassion, visiting his dying friends, cheering them up, reliving their glory days (his pals are suddenly presented in their peak days, looking pretty and breathtaking beneath the cake of their daring cosmetic), and healing them with his kindness and inexhaustible humor.

And so what if it were all just fantasy? In the final touching sequence, the old Markova goes back to her dressing-room mirror, puts on the flashiest gown, and applies the most outrageous rouge. Then she dances as in the days of her glory, her headdress and fake fur accentuating her frail but still graceful movements. Suddenly, the young Markova appears to continue the dance. Suddenly, the teenage Markova (Jeffrey Quizon) also appears, picking up from where the young Markova left off. Past and present combine in one flight—and dance—of swans. And the audience takes it all in, entranced by the magic of it all.

The movie casts a spell because of its technical competence (the production design, art direction, and costume are brilliant; the photography by Johnny Araojo is his best yet; the music is incredibly well-researched and effective; and the sound recording is crackerjack) and its powerful ensemble acting.

First-rate performances

As the old Markova, Dolphy is effortless and nearly flawless, endowing the role with both slapstick and heart. He shines particularly when he comforts his dissipating old colleagues in show business (legendary comedy film director Chaning Carlos renders a touching cameo as one of them), glowing with good nature and humor.

As the young Markova, Eric Quizon is coquettish, sexy and strong. His younger brother, Jeffrey Quizon, almost upstages him as the youthful Markova coming of age. Much of the laughter is drawn from this episode of Dempster's life, and the episode is rendered particularly piquant by Jeffrey's ebullience. The supporting cast deliver first-rate and energetic performances.

Despite its incredible merits, "Markova" was largely ignored in the last filmfest. It did not win any of the major awards. It wasn't even cited as a runner-up best film. The jurors had apparently interpreted too literally the festival guidelines for "family" and "Filipino" values and proceeded to dump the movie for more palatable fare.

But only a paramecium could have interpreted the contest rules that literally. Make that a homophobic paramecium.

Falsifying reality

Like "Markova," "Tuhog" is a victim of small minds in the industry. It tells of a woman and her daughter who sell the film rights to their harrowing experience—their abuse by the woman's father—only to be abused a second time by insensitive and sensationalistic filmmakers.

In the movie, Jeturian and writer Armando Lao reach new heights in their very productive collaboration, coming up with a scathing commentary on how the industry embellishes, rarefies, trivializes and ultimately falsifies reality.

"Tuhog" was shown in its unexpurgated form to a paying audience late last year. But it is doubtful whether audiences will be able to see it complete when it has its commercial release this year since it has been severely mangled in the editing room as a result of the X-rating given it by the MTRCB.

Apparently, certain sensibilities in the MTRCB could only appreciate the likes of "Sutla," "Talong" and "Anakan Mo Ako"—so that they found "Tuhog" morally objectionable and in poor taste.

Most successful

Other important movies of the year 2000:

"Azucena" (Reyna Films). Carlitos Siguion-Reyna continues his romance with taboos but with the old trivializing tendency on leash in this stylish, well-made movie that is notable for the powerful performances of Dante Rivero, Ricky Davao and Alessandra de Rossi.

"Anak" (Star Cinema). The year's most successful movie sometimes leans toward the mawkish, the result perhaps of its director's protracted work on TV where the success of productions is determined by how well they can populate an episode with bathos and melodrama the better to maintain the ratings and keep the advertisers coming.

But in its honest look at the domestic wages of migrant labor and the utterly moving performances of Vilma Santos and Baron Geisler, it is a significant movie.

"Lagarista" (Millennium Cinema). Mel Chionglo's paean to fading Manila moviehouses and the people whose lives depended on them is poetry at its best, derivative and spurious at its worst, particularly when it echoes too much the Italian neorealist movie "Cinema Paradiso." But the movie is still commendable for its production design, its photography, and its performances, particularly by Piolo Pascual, Pen Medina, Koko Trinidad and Jennifer Sevilla.

"Pangarap ng Puso" (Regal Films). Probably the year's most ambitious movie, Mario O'Hara's movie is a romance, a social drama, a poetic reading, and a magic-realist tapestry disguised as the comeback movie of former child star Matet de Leon.

Underrated

"Yakapin Mo ang Umaga" (Regal Films). One of the year's most underrated, this coming-of-age film by Jose Javier Reyes shines as an honest look at the confusions of youth and the drug subculture. Lorna Tolentino and Gigette Reyes deliver strong performances, but it is teenage actor Cogie Domingo who gets the lion's share of praises because he defies the worst predictions and delivers a vigorous and touching performance as the raw youth.

"Biyaheng Langit" (Viva Films). Tikoy Aguiluz had to struggle to have his underworld drama shown in the theaters in the face of a squeeze play by a powerful madame in the MTRCB. The struggle is worth the effort because the movie is searing and stylish, with a very realistic performance by Mark Anthony Fernandez.

"Abandonada" (Viva Films). Joel Lamangan's feminist melodrama is affecting and shows his increasing mastery of the character study. With a powerful performance by Maricel Soriano.

Stylish, earnest

"Gusto Ko Nang Lumigaya (Regal Films). Maryo J. de los Reyes seems to have rehashed his '90s hit "Sinungaling Mong Puso" in this stylish movie that is distinguished by Richard Padernal's very effective cinematography. If so, the movie improves on its parent, drawing finely on the experiences of a wife jailed by an unhappy marriage to a violent rich young man with political ambitions.

Pops Fernandez and Diether Ocampo at least don't do anything to destroy the movie. With insightful performances by Albert Martinez and Bojo Molina.

"Laro sa Baga" (Regal Films). Chito Roño's take on the Edgardo M. Reyes novel on the Pinoy macho is earnest, interesting, and devoted. Carlos Morales and Angel Aquino deliver credible performances.

"Tanging Yaman" (Star Cinema). Laurice Guillen's celebrated comeback movie is the year's best melodrama, nearly flawless and extremely intense as a passion play. A domestic drama like this must be welcomed not because we need to underscore the relevance of "family values," but because it shows that morality and religion are not enemies of artistic integrity; they in fact enhance it.

The quietest

"Sugatang Puso" (Regal Films). The quietest little film of the year that packs a wallop. Jose Javier Reyes achieves a concentration of fine drama here, without the hurry and the hassle of delivering a tear-jerking domestic drama. He achieves it because he's a fine writer, has an increasingly refined sense of drama, and has the help of capable actors like Christopher de Leon, Lorna Tolentino, Cherie Gil, Patrick Garcia and Carlos Aquino.

"Deathrow" (GMA Films). Surprisingly realistic in its treatment of prison life, this movie by Joel Lamangan is not cloying about its advocacy to save minors from the death row and is not sparing in its recreation of the harsh conditions of prison that smother the souls of even the most hardened criminals.

Perhaps the only drawbacks are the unusual flashbacks that are at best superfluous. But never mind. After all, it is mesmerizing watching Eddie Garcia, Pen Medina, Spanky Manikan, and even the young Cogie Domingo, who scores again in this well-crafted movie.

BACKROOM
RI
PA

BACKROOM CELEBRATES CHRISTMAS

Boy Abunda's Backroom family celebrated Christmas with an intimate party on Dec. 22. The affair started with a solemn thanksgiving Mass officiated by Fr. Vincent from the Parish of the Lord of Divine Mercy. After the Mass, everyone feasted on the buffet dinner catered by Dessa's Catering Services. Seen in the party were (from left) Calvin Millado, Dominic Ochoa, Ara Mina, Jonathan Valdez, Pinky Recto, Andy Topacio, Rowena Salido, Mary Ann Sta. Ana, Dessa, Peggy Sangco, Jet Valle and Bong Quintana (vice president for special events). Others who attended were Bettina Aspillaga, Ryan Brusola, CCP's Dennis Marasigan, Tina and Aileen of Equitable-PCIBank's Rustan's Cubao Branch, Peggy and Luisa, Almed Garcia, Irene de Leon, Cynthia Espiritu and Luis Cardona.

Watch·A·Video
Win·A·REVO

Congratulations!

Marilon Asilo
Rosario, Batangas Branch
(December Winner)

Geraldine Laguardia
Lipa City Branch
(April Winner)

Romeo Martinez Jr.
Malabon Concepcion Branch
(May Winner)

Lizaldo Esmeño
Blumentritt 1 Branch
(June Winner)

Michelle Alzate
Bangued, Abra Branch
(July Winner)

Annabelle Puno
10th Ave., Kalookan Branch
(August Winner)

Dominador Oriente
Vigan, Ilocos Sur Branch
(September Winner)

Nelson Lebumfacil
Tabunok Branch
(October Winner)

Aireen Ecrinal
Naga City Branch
(November Winner)

Thank you!

Join us as we zoom in
to the year 2001 with
more exciting promos
and surprises
for all of you!

VIDEO CITY

ENTERTAINMENT

LOUIE C. CAMINO, Editor

MMFF 2000

Outstanding entries, lackluster awards night

BY ALEX Y. VERGARA

WITH a running time of more than three hours, Wednesday's Metro Manila Film Festival's awards night was perhaps one of the shortest of its kind in recent memory. And probably one of the dullest as well.

No slapping, walkouts and envelope-switching marred the formal event, but surprise witnesses, er, nominees were aplenty.

We have nothing against the good Sen. Loren Legarda, but how on earth did she get nominated for Best Actress? The former media personality, who played herself briefly in "Markova: Comfort Gay," was up there with the likes of Lorna Tolentino and Gloria Romero.

And how come Dina Bonnevie and Hilda Koronel, who both played supporting roles in "Tanging Yaman," vied with Gloria and LT for the best actress plum?

Yes, both seasoned actresses did well in their respective roles, but the star-studded movie clearly revolved around Gloria's character and her two competing sons played by Johnny Delgado and Edu Manzano.

Then there were Vhong Navarro, Jhong Hilario, Danilo Barrios and Spencer Reyes—a.k.a. the Streetboys—who were pitted against the likes of Johnny, Dolphy, Eddie Garcia and Christopher "Boyet" de Leon for Best Actor. Please.

Even Boyet, who played a supporting role in "Sugatang Puso," didn't deserve the nomination. He stood a better chance of winning Best Supporting Actor had the jurors, led by veteran director Eddie Romero, been more discerning.

Well, Boyet's loss was Jeffrey Quizon's gain. As the teen Markova, he unwittingly upstaged elder brother Eric and dad Dolphy who also essayed the role in later stages of the character's life.

So, is being nominated honor enough, as sour grapes are wont to say? Well, certainly not at the MMFF where the best are often lumped together with pretenders and non-contenders.

Defeating the purpose

There can only be one *best*. So the practice of rating entries into first, second and third defeats the purpose of recognizing the best film. Organizers justify this move to boost the box-office chances of the other entries.

OUTSTANDING/ A18

BIG MEN. Dolphy congratulates Best Actor Johnny Delgado.

TIME OUT. Presidential son and San Juan Mayor Jinggoy Estrada, watches the show with Rudy Fernandez, whose "Ping Lacson Story" he produced.

SIBLING RIVALRY. Best supporting actor Jeffrey Quizon gets a hug from costar brother Eric Quizon.

PHOTOS BY LYN RILLON

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Starlab has been in operation since 1995 and has built up a loyal clientele through its own efforts in providing continual and consistent quality processing and cleanliness. The best equipment available on the market, from Australia and America was chosen for the lab and the strictest standards are adhered to in the operations.

The lab runs with a small group of dedicated technicians, who have a combined experience of many years in all aspects of lab operations. Our services include negative film processing for 35 and 16mm, negative cutting, and film cleaning. Starlab's clientele comes from both the television commercial and feature film industries

Several important foreign films have been processed with Starlab since operations began and foreign producers are confident in the process that is typical of the world standards they are used to in their own countries; Broke Down Palace for 20th Century Fox and MGM's "Kiss the Sky" are just some of the foreign films processed at Starlab.

Starlab is a key member of the Roadrunner Network and is very much involved in the local film industry and has handled many important movies: Rizal, Bata Bata, Ligaya, Muro Ami, Curacha and Bulaklak ng Maynila, to name a few.

This year's Metro Manila Film Festival entries all chose to have their camera negative processed at Starlab-- Tanging Yaman, Death Row, Sugatang Puso, Markova, Ping Lacson and Spirit Warriors

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MYX

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MONDAY, JANUARY 1, 2001 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER B1

BUSINESS

RAUL O. MARCELO, Editor ■ CORRIE S. NARISMA, Assistant Editor

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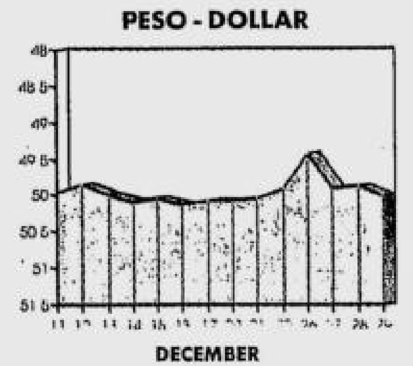
COMPAQ Inspiration Technology

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



Peso-Dollar Rate

P50.01 = $1
As of 5 p.m.,
Dec. 29, 2000

Y114.90 = $1
The US dollar was trading at 114.90 as of 5 p.m.,
Dec. 29, 2000

GOLD:$272.70/273.20
per ounce Hong Kong,
Dec. 29, 2000

STOCK MARKET

Dec. 29, 2000

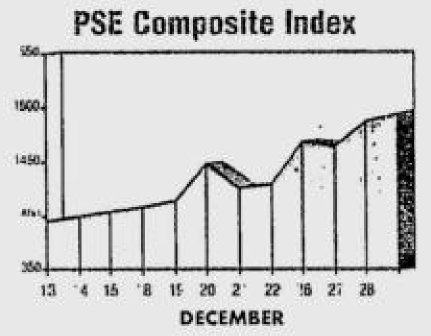
Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Foreign currency in US$	Foreign currency in Peso
United States	Dollar	1.075384	1.000000	49.9980
Japan	Yen	0.009396	0.008737	0.4368
United Kingdom	Pound	1.607700	1.495000	74.7470
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.137897	0.128230	6.4112
Switzerland	Franc	0.657888	0.611770	30.5873
Canada	Dollar	0.716828	0.666578	33.3276
Singapore	Dollar	0.621251	0.577701	28.8839
Australia	Dollar	0.593840	0.552212	27.6095
Bahrain	Dinar	2.852630	2.652661	132.6277
Kuwait	Dinar	N/A	N/A	N/A
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.286770	0.266667	13.3328
Brunei	Dollar	0.619461	0.576037	28.8007
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000112	0.000104	0.0052
Thailand	Baht	0.024917	0.023170	1.1585
UAE	Dirham	0.292821	0.272294	13.6142
Korea	Won	0.000859	0.000799	0.0399
Euro	Euro	1.000000	0.929900	46.4931
Germany	Deutsch	0.511292	0.47545	23.7715
France	Franc	0.152450	0.141762	7.0878
Netherlands	Guilder	0.453780	0.421970	21.0977
Austria	Schilling	0.072672	0.067578	3.3788
Belgium	Franc	0.024790	0.023052	1.1526
Italy	Lire	0.000516	0.000480	0.0240
Finland	Markka	0.168188	0.156398	7.8196
Portugal	Escudo	0.004988	0.004638	0.2319
Spain	Peseta	0.006010	0.005589	0.2794
Luxemburg	Franc	0.024790	0.023052	1.1526
Ireland	Punt	1.248230	1.160729	58.0341

Shares up

SHARES finished higher Friday, the last trading day of 2000, as investors sought to boost share prices to improve their portfolios in traditional year-end window dressing, traders said.

The 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange Index ended up 8.04 points, or 0.5 percent, at 1,494.50, after gaining 1.5 percent Thursday. The index has fallen 30 percent since the start of the year, pressured by the political crisis and ensuing economic concerns that plagued the country throughout 2000.

AP



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Aboitiz's franchise extended

ABOITIZ Power Corp.'s Davao Light and Power Co. has been granted a 25-year extension of its distribution franchise by virtue of Republic Act 8960 which became law last Sept. 29.

The law extends the term of Davao Light's franchise to construct, operate and maintain an electric light, heat and power system for a period of 25 years. The franchise area covers Davao City and the neighboring municipalities of Panabo, Carmen, Dujali and Santo Tomas. The company currently serves over 195,000 residential, commercial and industrial customers.

Davao Light and Power Co. was established in 1929 and acquired by the Aboitiz Group in 1947. Now the third largest private power utility in the country after Meralco and Visayan Electric Co., Davao Light is the flagship company among eight subsidiaries under the Aboitiz Power Corp., a wholly owned subsidiary of Aboitiz Equity Ventures.

INTEREST RATES

DAILY STATISTICAL INDICATORS
December 29, 2000

PARTICULARS	Today	Previous Day	Week Ago	Month Ago	Year Ago
Bangko Sentral R/P Rates (% p.a.) 1/					
29 December 2000					
Overnight R/P	15.7500	15.7500	15.7500	17.2500	O.H.
Term R/P	N.Q.	N.Q.	N.Q.	N.Q.	O.H.
Interbank Call Loan Rate (% p.a.)					
28 December 2000					
Weighted Ave.	13.5938	13.5938	13.5625	O.H.	O.H.
High	14.0000	14.0000	13.6250	O.H.	O.H.
Low	13.5625	13.5625	13.5625	O.H.	O.H.
Promissory Note Rates (% p.a.) 2/					
27 December 2000					
60 Days	14.0000	N.T.	N.T.	O.H.	O.H.
90 Days	N.T.	N.T.	N.T.	O.H.	O.H.
180 Days	N.T.	N.T.	N.T.	O.H.	O.H.
Foreign Interest Rates					
(% p.a.)					
90-day LIBOR	6.4000	6.4400	6.4600	6.7200	N.A.
90-day SIBOR	6.3800	6.4600	6.4800	6.7300	6.1800
180-day LIBOR	6.2000	6.2100	6.2500	6.6500	N.A.
180-day SIBOR	6.2100	6.2300	6.2700	6.6600	6.1700

1. Starting Oct. 30, 1987, Bangko Sentral R/P rates refer to the weighted average interest rate (WAIR) of transacted rates.
2. Of 10 sample commercial banks
N.Q.—No Quotation; N.T.—No Transaction
O.H.—Official Holiday

Forex reserves to hit $16B

By CLARISSA S. BATINO

INVESTMENTS from big-ticket retailers and a potential strategic partner of San Miguel Corp. should boost the country's dollar reserves this year to between $14.5 billion and $16 billion, according to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said gross international reserves this year should exceed last year's $14.5 billion.

"If confidence returns to normal, we expect an improvement in portfolio investments as well as direct investments that we were expecting last year," Buenaventura said.

He said investments from French retailers Casino Guichard-Perrachon SA and Carrefour SA, US retail giant Wal-Mart Stores Inc. and Dutch retailer Makro International should help augment the country's dollar reserves. Investments from these retailers would easily hit $500 million, he said.

Casino has agreed to acquire the debt-laden Uniwide chain of retail stores. Carrefour, however, has said it has "cast aside" its plan to invest in the Philippines because of the adverse political and economic situation in the country.

In a statement, the French firm's representative to the Philippines, Luc Dayot, said the company's decision was brought about by "a combination of economic and political factors."

Industry sources said the $60-billion Carrefour, the biggest multinational retailer in Asia, had planned to acquire a substantial stake in Rustan Supercenters Inc., owner of the Shopwise grocery chain, for over P3 billion.

The central bank's Buenaventura said he has also received word of an investment from NTT DoCoMo Inc., the world's biggest mobile phone firm.

He said the government was also counting on investments in San Miguel to augment its dollar reserves. The country's biggest food and beverage giant is reportedly holding talks for a joint venture with Japan's Asahi Breweries Inc. and Dutch beer giant Heineken Breweries NV.

"We also anticipate that companies would be interested to join the G3 auction this year," Buenaventura said.

The government is set to auction frequencies for 3G phones, the latest generation of cellular phone that will allow significant increases in data transmission speeds compared to 2G and 2.5G phones. That capability will allow phones to have Internet access, as well as other applications such as mobile videoconferencing and music downloading.

Buenaventura said business sentiment this year should improve and that should augment the country's dollar reserves.

As of November last year, the BSP reported a net portfolio outflow of $109.6 million compared to a net inflow of $386.8 million in November 1999.

The BSP earlier said gross international reserves would slip to $14.5 billion in 2000 from 1999's $15 billion.

The government was hoping to build up its dollar reserves to $16 billion to meet commitments it made to the International Monetary Fund.

The country's gross international reserves was seen falling despite a $200-million loan from US investment firm Chase Manhattan Corp. this month because of loans that the government has to pay.

Central bank figures showed that dollar reserves stood at $14.5 billion as of end-November from $14.4 billion the previous month. This much money could pay 4.5 months worth of imports.

The country's dollar reserves peaked to nearly $16 billion in March this year after the government floated $800 million worth of global bonds.

More dollars came in with the central bank $500-million syndicated loan in April, the national government's $300-million Samurai bond float and a $310-million IMF loan in August, and $400 million in loans from commercial banks.

The peso's weakness against the dollar, however, forced monetary authorities to use the country's dollar reserves to defend the local currency. That cost the government about $3 billion.

Government records showed that the GIR fell to $13 billion in October, the same month when the peso plunged to around 51 to a dollar after President Estrada was implicated in a scam involving illegal gambling payoffs.

SEC allows brokers to trade own accounts

By DORIS C. DUMLAO

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission has agreed to the proposal of securities analysts to allow brokers to trade their own accounts through other brokers.

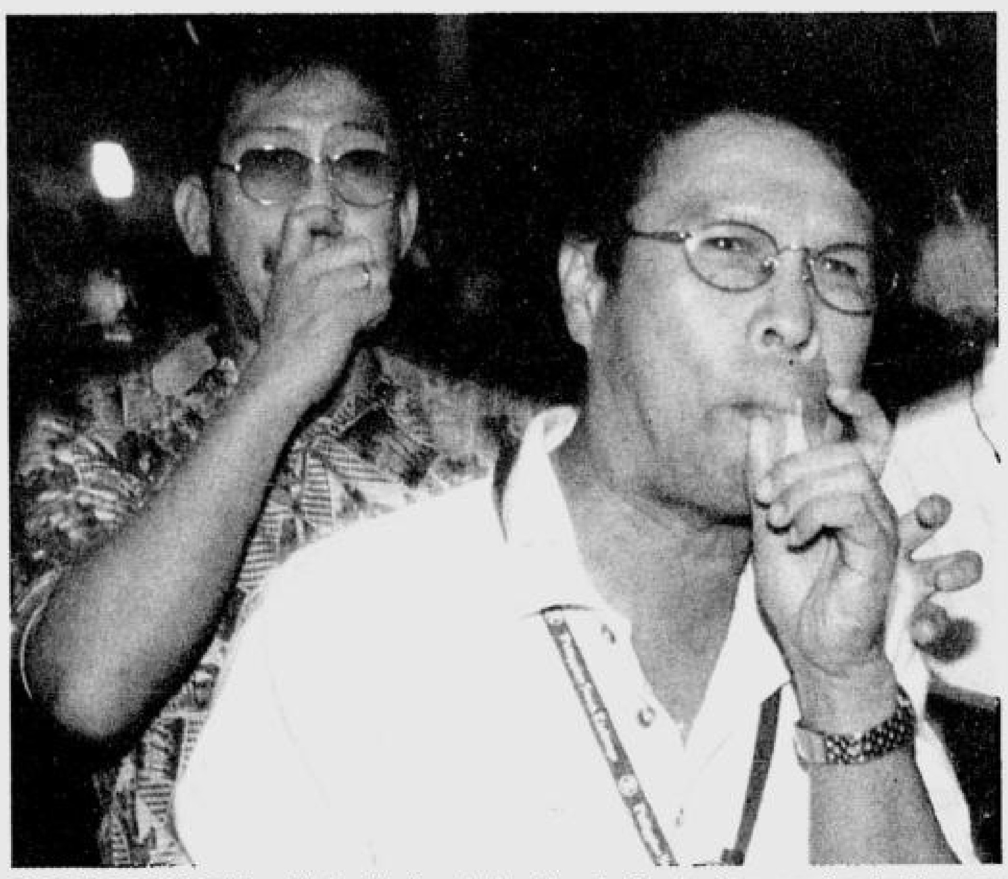
Philippine Stock Exchange president Ramon T. Garcia said this provision was included in the implementing rules and regulations of the Securities and Regulation Code.

"I think that was the compromise but it remains to be seen how this will affect the market," Garcia said.

Eagle Securities president and Association of Securities Analysts of the Philippines director Joseph Roxas said the association succeeded in pushing for their formula to make the IRR more flexible as far as the broker-dealer rule is concerned.

Under the IRR, market makers, which are exempted from the broker-dealer segregation, are defined as those with an authorized capital of P100 million. Brokers that fail to meet the minimum capital requirement can still maintain their own account but trades must be coursed through another broker.

Roxas said this would ease concerns on conflicts of interest when brokers trade for accounts of clients while trading for their own. By coursing trades through another broker, these brokers become ordinary clients on an equal footing with other clients.



STOCKBROKERS blow their whistles during the closing trading session for the year 2000 at the Philippine Stock Exchange.
REUTERS

POLITICAL UNCERTAINTIES

Korean firm junks expansion plans in RP

By CHRISTINE A. GAYLICAN

KOREAN Power Corp. subsidiary Kepco Philippines Inc. has scrapped its plans to put more money in the Philippines because of the unstable political climate.

"We don't have other plans in the pipeline aside from maintaining our current projects. They are already quite huge to keep us busy," Kepco president Oh In Taek said in an interview.

Kepco's biggest project here is the $710-million, 1,200-megawatt Ilijan gas-fired power plant in Batangas.

Oh said political uncertainties created by President Estrada's Senate impeachment trial and delays in the approval of key reforms in the power industry have forced Kepco to take a cautious approach to investing further in the Philippines.

It took nearly two years before Kepco secured documents it needed to work out a financing plan for its Ilijan power project.

Kepco leads the consortium of Kepco-Ilijan Corp., which has signed a memorandum of agreement with the Department of Energy to provide some P56 million for the electrification of 60 barangays in Oriental Mindoro.

Keilco recently sealed agreements to secure $475 million in loans from the Export-Import Bank of the United States, Korean Export-Import Bank and the Japan Bank For International Cooperation.

This should ensure financial backing for the construction of the Ilijan gas-fired power plant of Keilco under a 25-year build-operate-transfer contract with the government-run National Power Corp.

Oh told the INQUIRER that Keilco has finally resolved issues concerning technical and commercial operation methods raised by the US Eximbank.

"There are no more critical issues, especially on that part of our service contract which states the mode of collecting revenues as soon as we start our commercial operations," he said.

He said the government has approved a revised contract that will allow Keilco to put up and manage the Ilijan power plant.

Kepco has also finalized an equity sharing with its partners: Southern Energy Philippines, which will have a 20-percent stake; Mitsubishi Electric, 21 percent; and Kyushu Electric; 8 percent.

The Ilijan power plant is expected to draw natural gas from the $2-billion Camago-Malampaya natural gas field being developed in Palawan by Shell Exploration BV.

The power plant, which forms part of the $5-billion gas-to-power projects of the government, should begin commercial operations by January 2002.

Rating system for garment makers readied

By GIL C. CABACUNGAN JR.

THE GARMENTS and Textile Export Board is drawing up a rating system for the garments industry to pinpoint local apparel makers who are capable of competing in a quota-free world market.

Acting Trade and Industry Secretary Thomas G. Aquino said the GTEB has been conducting a survey of the capabilities of garments exporters from their production efficiency to compliance to ethical manufacturing standards.

The industry survey is part of GTEB's strategy of promoting the Philippines as a reliable supplier of quality apparel for global brand proprietors GAP, Polo Ralph Lauren, Ann Taylor, Liz Claiborne, Jansport, Nike, Sears and Disney.

By appraising their capabilities, the GTEB can confidently recommend local apparel makers as suppliers to multinational corporations. The GTEB can also identify which companies still need support from the government before they can grow as a world-class manufacturer.

Aquino said that by building a track record as reliable suppliers, GTEB was hopeful that the local apparel makers would maintain their supplier contracts even after the country's quota privileges in the US (which accounts for over 70 percent of exports) have expired in 2004.

Garments are the country's second largest export sector with sales of $2.917 billion in the first 11 months this year, up by nearly 12 percent from $2.610 billion during the same period last year. The industry is well on its way to surpassing its $3-billion export target this year.

The Philippines ranked No. 10 among the biggest country-suppliers of apparel to the United States, according to a report by the International Business and Economic Research Corp. The Philippines had a 3.4-percent share of the $15.309 billion worth of garments purchased by the US all over the world in the first seven months this year.

Aside from the US, Aquino said the GTEB was aggressively promoting the garments exports in the quota-markets of Europe, the second biggest market of Philippine-made garments.

Aquino said GTEB would not stop developing the industry as a mere supplier to global brands but it was also pushing for the creation of homegrown apparel brands for export.

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Day 13

COCKTALES

By Victor C. Agustin

TOMORROW will be the 13th day of the Senate impeachment hearings. Given that the numbers that have so far materialized do not add up in his favor, Joseph Estrada has all the more reason to suffer another bout of tridecaphobia.

Interrupted by the Christmas-New Year break, the prosecution has been raring to present Equitable PCIBank's legal counsel, Manuel Curato, and another "bombshell" of a witness to corroborate the eyewitness account of chief trust officer Clarissa Ocampo that Jose Velarde is none other than you-know-who.

To start off this fresh round of fear-of-13 scenarios, consider the private prosecutor that examined Ocampo and will also present Curato, Mario Bautista, who has 13 letters to his name. Or Simeon Marcelo, the private prosecutor who presented Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson.

Despite the continuing objections of defense panel, Bautista and the other private prosecutors have been allowed to appear alongside the House prosecutors by, coincidentally, Rule 13 of the Senate rules on impeachment.

Including Ocampo and the five branch managers, exactly 13 officers of Equitable Bank had been shortlisted to take the witness stand, culminating in recently resigned chair/CEO George Go.

Go's replacement, lawyer Ricardo Romulo, of the Makati Business Club fame, also has 13 letters to his name.

By another twist of numerological fate, Equitable Bank's code number in the check-clearing house operations happens to also be "13."

Even Go's reported counsel/father confessor, Joaquin Bernas, has 13 letters to his registered name, although the Jesuit may simply shrug off any netherworldian significance to such accidence.

The Equitable Bank officers that paved the way for the "Jose Velarde" and the Erap Muslim Youth Foundation accounts, Beatriz Bagsit and Romuald Dy Tang, happen to suffer the same numerological accident.

And so does the ledger/"listahan" submitted by "jueteng" auditor Yolanda Ricaforte, consisting of 13 sheets.

Despite his well-reported aversion to the number, you-know-who, in his most desperate hours, continue to be surrounded and protected by persons with "13" stamped on their foreheads—Luisa Pimentel, Ronaldo Zamora, Ernesto Maceda, Panfilo Lacson, Edgardo Angara, Jaime Dichaves, and now by lawyers Edward Serapio, Andres Narvasa and Raymund Fortun.

Finally, the impeachment court that would seal the presidential fate is being presided by a chief justice with, yes, 13 letters to his name.

The Erap CD

DESPITE its underground origins, "The White Album: Erap" has already reached platinum status if we go by the number of copies pressed and sold.

The original producer of the anti-Erap album has already printed and sold 33,000 tape copies and another 5,000 in compact discs. The figures will geometrically increase if bootleg copies are factored in, considering that duplication of the album is, in the words of its unnamed producer, "highly encouraged."

The Erap CD has also gone overseas and is now also being mass-copied in the United States, serving both propaganda and fund-raising objectives of the broad anti-Estrada coalition.

If plans push through, a courageous local distributor will shortly market "The White Album" out in the open.

Short takes

- AFTER his first failed initial attempt in the 1998 elections, JV Ejercito is once again seeking congressional representation in the May 2001 elections via the party-list route through his newly formed Abakada party.
- EQUITABLE PCIBank asked for and received an unspecified amount of liquidity assistance from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas during the holidays.
- ESPERANZA Osmeña, one of the few remaining management officers of PCIBank that stayed on after the merger with Equitable Bank, has opted to retire over the yearend.

Osmeña headed PCIBank's treasury operations until the merger and was, until retirement, Equitable PCIBank's executive vice president for financial services and operations.

Heard through the grapevine

GUIA Gomez is in the United States to seek medical treatment for multiple sclerosis after tests in both St. Luke's and Makati Medical Center confirmed the onset of the debilitating disease.

(Cocktales may be reached by e-mail at cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com or at cocktales_pdi@hotmail.com.)

Stocks in for a 'scary' week

By Doris C. Dumlao

LOCAL stocks are in for a scary opening salvo this week following a series of bombings that hit Metro Manila this weekend.

Analysts say the bombings will trigger sell-offs when the stock market opens tomorrow, erasing last week's gains.

"Definitely, this will have a negative impact. Investors have been waiting for at least a constitutional resolution to the present crisis, but now we're starting to see violence," Securities 2000 Inc. research chief Erwin Tan said.

"Investors will have to see who is responsible for the violence, but it certainly doesn't help resolve the political crisis already hounding the market," Tan said.

Investors were bullish in the last trading week of 2000 on optimism that President Estrada's impeachment trial would end sooner than expected following testimonies of a surprise witness that supported the prosecution's case that he had amassed millions in ill-gotten wealth.

The testimony of Equitable PCIBank senior vice president Clarissa Ocampo triggered selective buying of blue chips. The main share Philippine Stock Exchange composite index soared to its highest level since early November, gaining 4.57 percent week-on-week to close Friday at 1,494.50. Selective buying by those betting on Mr. Estrada's ouster focused on blue-chip counters Ayala Corp., Ayala Land Inc., Meralco A and B, Philippine Long Distance and Telephone Co., and Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co.

Eagle Equities Inc. president Joseph Roxas said the outlook this week was bad because of the bombings and because corporate window-dressing had ended.

BPI Securities Inc. analyst Spencer Yap said the market was already expected to remain volatile over the course of the trial and advised investors to exercise caution.

"The start of the New Year may trigger some corrections on selected blue-chip issues as investors reposition portfolios. There may be fresh opportunities for accumulation," he said.

EVERY Monday, starting January 1, 2001, a series of Philippine Banking history will run in the business section of the **Philippine Daily Inquirer**, in commemoration of the 150th year of the Bank of the Philippine Islands, formerly El Banco Español Filipino de Isabel II (The Spanish Filipino Bank of Isabel), the first bank in the Philippines and Southeast Asia. ADVT

PHILIPPINE BANKING

Did you know?

…that the first bank in the Philippines, established in Manila on August 1, 1851 and originally called *El Banco Español Filipino de Isabel 2*, was also the first bank in Southeast Asia?

…that this bank was organized 23 years after the king of Spain, Ferdinand VII, issued a decree to establish a public bank in the Philippines?

…that before the establishment of *El Banco Español Filipino de Isabel 2*, the functions of banks were performed, though on a limited scale, by the *obras pias* (Spanish for "pious works")?

…that *obras pias* were an accumulation of bequests whose donors had specified that the funds be used for charitable, religious and educational purposes?

…that some of the funds were managed by confraternities that invested capital in secular activities like underwriting cargoes for the galleon trade?

…that the organization of the first bank in the Philippines was spearheaded by His Excellency Antonio de Urbiztondo, who was then the Spanish governor and captain-general of the Philippine Islands?

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ERRATUM

We regret the error in the captions of the following photos in the "MasterCard Electronic Launch" story that appeared in this section last December 29, 2000. The captions should have read:

1st e-Bank's Chief Information Officer Primo B. Aguas welcomes Sonny Sannon to the Philippines. Looking on are 1st e-Bank's Corazon R. Estrella, DEVP and CFO, and Carlos A. Pedrosa, President and CEO.

From left: Dan C. Ibarra, SVP Consumer Business, Smart Mobile Consumer Business; Judith Marie D. Dayrit, Director, Member Relations and Marketing, MasterCard International; and Primo B. Aguas.

Forecast for 2001

ON THE MONEY

John Mangun

HAPPY New Year and welcome to the new century. No, Jan. 1, 2000 was not the beginning of the 21st century or the new millennium. Today is. Think about it. To begin the new millennium, 2,000 years must have passed. Those 2,000 years did not "pass" until we completed the 2,000th year. Yesterday was the end of the 2,000th year. So today, we begin the year 2001 and the 21st century. Maybe that is what the problem has been. We haven't been able to figure out what century it really is.

Let me begin this year by issuing a warning on a topic I discussed several times last year—the war between the United States and the rest of the world. If you noticed over the last two months, the price of crude oil and the value of the dollar have both dropped significantly. In fact, oil is down 30 percent in the last 30 days. I was confident that this was going to happen, but I did not think it would take place so soon. I thought that these two events would happen slowly over the first quarter of 2001. But consumer spending slowed so much in the United States during the run-up to the holidays that there is a probability that the United States will slip into a recession by this June. The first stage of the "war" was to ensure that other countries became dependent on the US market to sell their goods. This second phase is a tactical retreat. A weak dollar will now swing the tide and induce the Europeans to buy American goods while reducing US demand for imports. The Europeans are the ones that are going to get hurt. It may even help Asia.

The dropping dollar is important to us because, as I predicted, oil prices will continue to fall and pump prices will come down. The peso will stay steady although undervalued until politics takes a back seat to economic reality.

Regardless of what the UP economy people say, 2000 was a fundamentally sound economic year. Recently released numbers for the nine months, end-October, show imports growing 50-percent faster than in 1999. Bank lending grew 8 percent in October and Meralco reported an 8-percent increase in nine-month power sales. Volume of production was up 12 percent in the first nine months also. Public sector credit almost doubled. I know these numbers don't make much sense so let me clarify a bit. Last year was a troubling year for business. Business expanded a bit or paid down some of its debt. We produced more goods, but profit margins were lower. People held on to their money, putting it in the banks. And the banks split their use of money almost evenly between loaning to the government and to the private sector. All, both business and the consumer were more conservative with their funds during the January-October period.

Now, of course, it is anyone's guess what the fourth quarter will look like. For what I am being told, December was better than what most people expected. But the key will be if shoppers spent their 13th month pay for gifts or put the money in the bank. I am inclined to believe it was "half-half." And that will reduce growth significantly for the last quarter.

Right now, the picture looks like this to me. There is plenty of money in the system. Inflation is low and oil prices are coming down. There is pent-up demand that is looking for a reason to go out and buy. Prices of goods are "undervalued" because producers have reduced profit margins. If we can see some light at the end of the political tunnel, consumers may open their wallets and bring the economy back quickly in these first three months.

The stock market looks fairly good from a technical point of view. But I am troubled. I guess that part of my problem is, as I expressed last week, dissatisfaction with the Philippine Stock Exchange in general. And I intend to talk more about that later. But for the time being, my investment advice for the first quarter is this. Play the political whimsy as I spoke of last month. However, the words of Sixto Roxas keep nagging in my ear. If we are at the bottom of a nine-year cycle, then stocks that will advance will advance (or stagnate) on sound valuations. That is, stock prices will more closely follow company value.

Therefore, longer-term investors should, most basically, be looking at price earnings ratios (PER). The local market usually does not follow traditional wisdom and practice when it comes to PER. However, at the turning points I mentioned a few weeks ago, PER is the way to play. PE ratios between five and eight (when you can find them) would be the most attractive. I would not wait for the yearend results to be released. Use the first nine months of 1999. Fourth quarter will be poor anyway. And I believe that we will recover from that quarter fairly quickly. Stocks with a 10 to 15 PER will not go up as quickly if this market carries through to the 1600-1800 range. My opinion is, higher than 15 PER is way overpriced right now.

My "hot tip" for the first quarter will be those companies involved in purchasing over the Internet. I know the US companies are dying, but this is the Philippines and we are new to the business. If the economy comes back the way I expect it will over the next six months, our home made "dotcoms" will make a lot of money. I said a few months ago there were several of these companies that would double in price by this first quarter. Well, do not hold me to that forecast. But I strongly believe that will happen and more by June 2001.

And of course, investors can always fall back on that cliché we have used so often in the past. It has to get better because it can't get any worse. Brother, what a way to start the New Year.

(John Mangun can be reached at Fax No. 634-2349 or email at jm@epic.net.)

Philippine Stock Exchange

(As of Friday, December 29, 2000)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	8.20	8.3	8	8	22,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	58.00	58.5	58	58	304,700
Chinatrust Comm. Bank	18.25	18.25	18.25	18.25	30,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	58.50	59	57.5	59	1,056,100
Global Business Bank Inc.	80.00	80	80	80	20,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	183.0	184	182	183	176,330
Philippine National Bank	36.00	38	36	38	2,200
Phil. Savings Bank	29.00	30	29	30	3,600
Rizal Comm'l Bkg. Corp. "A"	24.00	30	24	30	9,000
Security Bank Corp.	23.50	28	23.5	28	808,200
Union Bank of the Phil.	24.50	34	24.5	34	140,000
FINANCIAL SERVICE					
Bankard Inc.	1.60	1.6	1.54	1.54	476,000
First Abacus Financial	.6000	.7	.6	.7	210,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	250.0	250	250	250	200
Manulife Financial Corp.	1510	1545	1510	1530	6,950
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.22	1.24	1.22	1.24	200,000
Sun Life Financial Serv.	1260	1295	1260	1280	35,770
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	48.50	50	48.5	49.5	462,000
Diversified Fin. Network	8.80	10.25	8.8	10.25	18,000
Digital Telecom Phils. Inc.	.4500	.46	.45	.46	870,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	685.0	700	670	700	19,760
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	4.20	4.2	3.9	4.2	8,000
Piltel	.5800	.58	.56	.56	50,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	850.0	875	850	865	85,830
Ivantage Corp.	.9000	.9	.89	.89	160,000
Philweb.com Inc.	.0430	.043	.041	.042	67,100,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. "A"	49.00	49	48.5	49	95,800
Manila Electric Co. "B"	50.50	50.5	49.5	49.5	1,991,500
Petron Corp.	1.24	1.26	1.2	1.2	3,231,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.06	1.12	1.06	1.12	1,327,000
Int'l Container Term'l SV	.7900	.79	.78	.78	180,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	.7100	.71	.71	.71	1,091,350,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	.3700	.37	.36	.36	980,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	.1350	.135	.135	.135	90,000
Union Cement Corp.	.5000	.7	.45	.7	3,530,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Jollibee Foods Corp.	9.60	9.7	9.6	9.7	312,000
La Tondeña Distillers Inc.	30.00	30.5	30	30.5	111,000
Pancake House Inc.	1.68	1.68	1.68	1.68	2,000
Pure Foods Corp. "A"	80.00	90	80	90	3,400
Pure Foods Corp. "B"	90.00	90	90	90	1,000
RFM Corp.	1.00	1	1	1	320,000
Swift Food Inc.	1.00	1	1	1	20,000
San Miguel Corp. "A"	48.00	48.5	47.5	48.5	85,600
San Miguel Corp. "B"	54.00	55.5	54	55.5	917,800
Vitarich Corp.	.4000	.4	.4	.4	110,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con. Res. & Hdg. "A"	.4900	.49	.48	.48	20,000
Abacus Con. Res. & Hdg. B	.5300	.53	.53	.53	10,000
Ayala Corp.	7.60	7.7	7.5	7.7	5,788,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	11.75	13.25	11.75	13.25	68,800
A. Soriano Corp.	.2800	.28	.24	.24	310,000
APC Group Inc.	.1600	.16	.16	.16	130,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	2.04	2.12	2.04	2.12	521,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	2.00	2.06	2	2.06	82,000
Bacnotan Cons. Indus. Inc.	13.50	13.5	13.5	13.5	1,500
Benpres Holdings Corp.	3.05	3.05	2.9	2.9	1,135,000
Southeast Asian Cement	.2000	.2	.2	.2	50,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	.2800	.28	.27	.27	1,100,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	.0500	.05	.05	.05	400,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	.6600	.66	.66	.66	30,000
First Phil. Hldgs. Corp.	21.00	21	20.75	20.75	54,900
Forum Pacific Inc.	-	-	-	-	-
Global Equities Inc.	.3600	.36	.34	.34	600,000
Guoco Holdings (Phils.)	-	-	-	-	-
House of Investments Inc.	.6800	.68	.68	.68	90,000
Ionics Inc.	14.75	15.75	14.5	15.75	2,462,700
Ipeople Inc.	-	-	-	-	-
Ipeople Inc. "B"	-	-	-	-	-
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	2.08	2.08	2.08	2.08	47,000
Macroasia Corp.	2.10	2.1	2.1	2.1	40,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. "A"	-	-	-	-	-
Marsteel Cons. Inc. "B"	-	-	-	-	
Medco Holdings	-	-	-	-	-
Megaworld Corp.	.8000	.8	.78	.8	360,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	.5800	.6	.57	.6	26,910,000
Solid Group Inc.	.5100	.53	.51	.52	140,000
Tanduay Holdings Inc.	5.50	5.5	5.5	5.5	20,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	.5500	.55	.51	.51	5,170,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	.4900	.49	.49	.49	520,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc	.3700	37	3	.35	1,850,000
Zeus Holdings Inc	3000	.3	.3	.3	180,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Matsushita Elec. Phil. Corp.	4.30	6	4.3	6	2,000
Macondray Plastics Inc.	6.40	6.4	6.4	6.4	40,000
Music Corp.	2.95	2.95	2.85	2.85	270,000
Picop Resources Inc.	.1150	.115	.115	.115	600,000
Pryce Corp.	.6900	.82	.69	.82	260,000
Philippine Seven Corp.	6.90	6.9	6.9	6.9	10,000
SPI Technologies Inc	7.60	7.7	7.6	7.7	93,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICE					
Belle Corp.	6900	7	69	.69	3,400,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	.8000	.85	.76	.83	5,640,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	.4500	.45	.44	.44	3,100,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	.1650	.165	.16	.16	340,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (PDR)	49.00	49.5	49	49	626,000
Equitable PCI Bank-War	3.10	3.15	3	3	382,000
Globe Telecom Hldg. (PDR)	685.0	700	685	700	4,500
Jollibee Warrants	9.20	9.3	9.2	9.3	189,000
Omico Corp. Warrant	.0028	.0028	.0026	.0026	12,000,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series P	10.00	10	10	10	2,500
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	12,200
PLDT (10% Pref) Series U	10.25	11	10.25	11	8,700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	11.00	11	11	11	1,600
PLDT 10% Pref Series "Aa"	9.60	9.6	9.6	9.6	2,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	5.50	5.6	5.4	5.4	14,019,000
Araneta Properties Inc.	.3500	.36	.32	.32	400,000
Cityland Development Corp.	2.70	2.7	2.7	2.7	2,000
C & P Homes Inc.	.2000	.2	.19	.19	3,200,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	.4200	.42	.42	.42	40,000
Empire East Land Inc.	.3100	.32	.31	.31	16,530,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.38	1.38	1.34	1.36	8,727,000
Gotesco Land Inc.	.0575	.0575	.0575	.0575	100,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	1.10	1.1	1.1	1.1	121,494,000
City & Land Developers	2.40	2.4	2.4	2.4	2,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	.1350	.135	.125	.135	130,000
SM Development Corp.	.8500	.85	.82	.82	500,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	5.90	5.9	5.6	5.8	10,970,000
Universal Rightfield Prop.	.0900	.09	.08	.08	900,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. "A"	.0050	.005	.005	.005	9,000,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. "B"	.0050	.005	.005	.005	6,000,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. "A"	.1950	.195	.195	.195	1,000,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co "B"	.1950	.195	.195	.195	200,000
Omico Corp.	.0038	.0038	.0038	.0038	285,000,000
United Paragon Mining Co.	.1500	.15	.15	.15	150,000
OIL					
Imperial Res.	.0230	.023	.023	.023	5,000,000
Interport Res.	.0050	.0065	.005	.0065	4,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. "A"	.0044	.0044	.0042	.0042	13,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. "B"	.0042	.0042	.0042	.0042	6,000,000
Pacifica	.0150	.015	.014	.014	9,000,000
Vulcan Ind'l.	.1900	.19	.19	.19	500,000

	SHARES	VALUE (P)
Banks & Fin Svc	42,757,132	3,903,383,905.80
Comm'l & Ind'l	1,248,614,090	1,220,142,040.00
PRO	177,014,000	292,516,830.00
Mining	301,350,000	1,414,500.00
OIL	37,500,000	441,300.00
GRAND TOTALS:	1,807,235,222	5,417,898,575.80

	AVERAGES	
Banks & Fin Svc	554.06	UP16.80
Comm'l & Ind'l	2,104.54	UP22.65
PRO	508.17	DOWN 8.52
Mining	1,245.08	DOWN16.54
OIL	1.73	DOWN 0.02
All Shares Index	829.93	UP23.32
Composite	1,494.50	UP8.04

NO. OF ADVANCES: 47; NO. OF DECLINES: 38; NO. OF UNCHANGED: 35; NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 120; NO. OF TRADES: 3,369

Gov't says leaded gas no longer sold in RP

LEADED gasoline has been completely phased out of the country as of December, the Department of Energy has reported.

Energy Secretary Mario Tiaoqui said in an interview that local oil companies were no longer selling leaded gasoline to comply with the Clean Air Act.

"The oil companies gave notices to their dealers all over the country to replace their leaded gasoline stock with unleaded gasoline," Tiaoqui said.

"As part of our regular monitoring, the DOE conducts fuel quality tests in service stations to check compliance with product standards. Oil companies and dealers found violating the Philippine national standard for unleaded gasoline will be subjected to the penalties provided under the deregulation law of the downstream oil industry," he said.

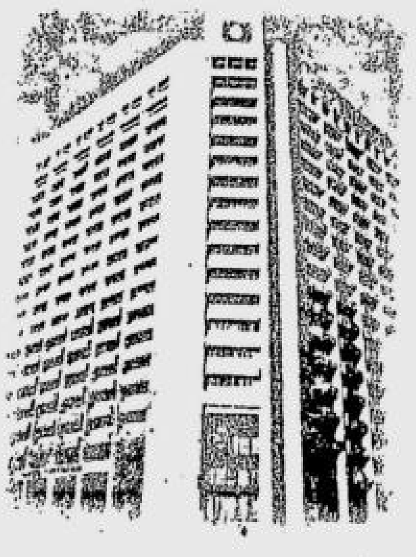
In April last year, local oil firms signed a memorandum of agreement with the energy department to hasten efforts to phase out leaded gasoline.

Unleaded gasoline was first introduced in the country in 1994, but its consumption rose only after the government lowered the specific taxes by P1 a liter on these products.

Christine A. Gaylican

BANK OF THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

Tradition • Leadership • Innovation



Leading the Banking e-Volution

In its nearly 150 years of existence, the Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI) has become a symbol of banking stability and excellence in the country.

Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI) holds the distinction of having introduced banking in the Philippines and in Southeast Asia. Following its recent merger with Far East Bank and Trust Company (FEBTC), in a deal considered to be among the biggest in the region, BPI has also become the undisputed leader in all markets in the Philippines. It is the leading player in consumer banking, trust and asset management, investment banking, insurance and the remittance business. It is also the first bancassurance firm in the country after its acquisition of the insurance companies under the Ayala Insurance Holdings Corporation. For almost a decade now, it has been consistently cited for its financial soundness and long-term vision, a feature it is proud to share as the financial arm of the Ayala Group, one of the most diversified and well-managed conglomerates in Asia.

A Tradition of Firsts

The bank's history of firsts began in 1851 when it was established as a public bank named *El Banco Español Filipino de Isabel* 2. Apart from introducing the first paper money in the Philippines, it also financed the first railway system, the first telephone system, the first electric utility, and the first steamship service.

After it was renamed Bank of the Philippine Islands in 1912, the bank continued to lead in providing essential financial services to the Philippine economy. In the post-war era, BPI took an active part in the rebuilding effort to put the country on the road to recovery after the devastation wrought by the Pacific war.

In 1969, BPI became the financial arm of the Ayala Group of Companies and has since been among the biggest and most financially sound banking institutions in the Philippines in terms of total assets, funds managed and branch network. At present, BPI has close to 700 domestic branches, nearly 1,000 automated teller machines (ATMs) and about 2,600 point-of-sale terminals.

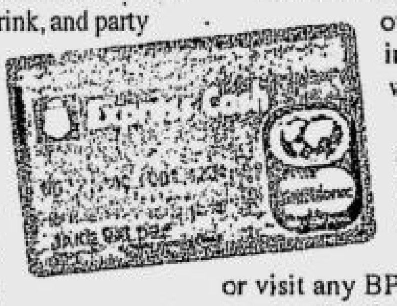
With one and a half centuries of experience, BPI stands out as the only bank whose existence is closely associated with the development of Philippine banking. Recognizing the bank's core strengths, reputable financial publications such as *Euromoney, Global Finance, Finance Asia,* and *AsiaMoney* have consistently honored BPI as the top/best domestic bank in the Philippines, just as the bank again landed in the list of companies with a high measure of financial soundness based on a survey conducted by the *Far Eastern Economic Review.*

BPI launches Express Cash

The Bank of the Philippine Islands, the bank that introduced banking in 1851, recently launched BPI Express Cash, its newest electronic innovation.

Through almost a decade and a half, of banking leadership and financial strength, BPI has strived to provide the most extensive electronic banking services to the public.

With the BPI Express Cash, shopping and dining are made much easier and convenient. In a flash, a cardholder can shop, dine, drink, and party in over 13,000 establishments nationwide where MasterCard Electronic is accepted.



Unlike other cards, you can get BPI Express Cash in a flash. One only needs to fill-up an applicaton form to be submitted to any BPI or BPI Family Bank branch, together with a one-time processing fee of P100.00. After just three days, you can load a minimum of P500 and start flashing your own, personalized BPI Express Cash. There's no need to open an account.

1994 -2000 Most Financially Sound Company in the Philippines
---Far Eastern Economic Review

1999 Award of Excellence
---Euromoney

1999 Country Awards for Achievement
Best Domestic Commercial Bank
in the Philippines
---Finance Asia

1999 Top Domestic Bank in its Country of Operation
---Global Finance

1998 Best Commercial Bank in the Philippines
---AsiaMoney

1998 Best Domestic Bank in the Philippines
---Euromoney

1997 Best Investment Bank in the Philippines
(BPI Capital Corporation)
---AsiaMoney

Applications for Express Cash may also be made by simply dialing 89-100 or logging on to www.bpiexpressonline.com.

With your BPI Express Cash, you don't have to carry lots of bills around. It's like carrying cash, but with a lot of security because in case of loss, you can dial 89-100 for assistance.

The card is accepted in major establishments and shopping outlets. Just look for the MasterCard Electronic seal in making a transaction. It's like paying in cash—with a card you can flash!

When your card is swiped, sign your name on the sales slip and the deal is done. No more worrying about bank statements and bills at the end of the month.

For inquiries and card application, call 89-100 or visit any BPI/BPI Family Bank Metro Manila branch. A whole new world of shopping convenience awaits you!

Ready for the New e-Conomy

The undisputed leader in consumer and electronic banking in the Philippines, the Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI), breaks new ground with the introduction of banking convenience through internet banking facilities. In the era of fast-paced advances in computer and communications technology, BPI is committed to embrace the new economy and lead the electronic revolution in banking. These internet initiatives enables customers to do all banking transactions on the computer anytime of the day, seven days a week by logging on to any of the Bank's various internet web sites.

BPI Direct Savings Bank (www.bpidirect.com) is the first phone and internet bank in the Philippines, and is a wholly-owned subsidiary of BPI. Although it offers basically the same services as a traditional branch, BPI Direct is entirely on-line. Clients can open deposit accounts, either BPI Direct savings or checking, apply for consumer loans and credit cards and soon, even do stock trading on-line.

BPI DIRECT

BPI Express Online (www.bpiexpressonline.com) is a transaction platform catering to the existing clients of BPI and BPI Family Bank.

BPI *Express* ONLINE

BPI Express Online makes banking faster, easier and more convenient. Clients can access their deposit accounts, check deposit account balances and other transaction details, transfer funds, perform direct stop payment order of issued checks, open a new account, apply for a housing or auto loan or credit card, re-order checkbooks, and pay bills to over 60 merchants nationwide. People on the move can now experience the convenience of anytime, anywhere banking as BPI Express Online goes mobile. You can do the same banking transactions, but with a different channel, other than your PC. Enjoy **WAP banking** by using your WAP enabled cellular phone, a Globe SIM card and a previously enrolled BPI, BPI Family Bank or BPI Direct account to BPI Express Online.

BPI Express Link (www.bpiexpresslink.com) is the internet-based product for the Bank's corporate clientele. Your finance, accounting, sales and production divisions are in greater control of your company's financial, operational and cash management requirements. Through Expresslink, you can inquire about your live balances, get details on your debit and credit memos as well as your transactions for the past two months, monitor daily collections and review your current records of transactions, even your trade summaries.

BPI ExpressLink

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BPI *Trade*

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF CONDITION

September 30, 2000

ASSETS		
Cash and Cash Items	P	6,542,840,518
Due from Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas		25,689,957,520
Due from Other Banks		33,306,174,224
Interbank Loans Receivable		1,314,000,000
Trading Account Securities (Net)		16,322,046,813
Investment in Bonds and Other Debt Instruments (Net)		61,105,175,684
Loans, Discounts and Advances (Net)		174,235,368,449
Bank Premises, Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment (Net)		11,509,542,179
Other Assets (Net)		34,156,086,419
TOTAL ASSETS	P	364,181,191,806
LIABILITIES AND CAPITAL		
Demand Deposits	P	26,470,311,417
Savings Deposits		184,788,007,835
Time Deposits		64,699,067,002
Total Deposits		275,957,386,254
Due to Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas		495,196,040
Due to Other Banks		2,568,889,390
Outstanding Checks/Payment Orders		6,621,893,703
Bills Payable		12,145,092,276
Other Liabilities		16,394,874,250
TOTAL LIABILITIES	P	314,183,331,913
Minority Interest in Subsidiaries	P	5,529,823
Capital Stock	P	15,289,442,029
Surplus		31,462,262,650
Surplus Reserves		3,240,625,391
TOTAL CAPITAL	P	49,992,330,070
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND CAPITAL	P	364,181,191,806
CONTINGENT ACCOUNTS		
Assets Held Under Trust and Investment Management Agreements (at NAV)	P	200,382,719,855
Bills for Collection		5,835,385,047
[illegible] Exchange Bought		11,935,499,583
[illegible] Exchange Sold		28,023,571,395
[illegible] Letters of Credit		[illegible]
[illegible]		[illegible]

The BPI 150th Anniversary Ingot (Gold or Silver)

A Nation's Legacy

The Bank of the Philippine Islands marks its 150th Anniversary on August 1, 2001.

Pesos Fuertes
The first banknote in the Philippines and Asia
1852

As the oldest commercial bank in all of Southeast Asia, BPI has witnessed the birth of the Philippine Republic, sharing its pain as a colony, its difficulties as an occupied territory, and its triumph as a sovereign nation.

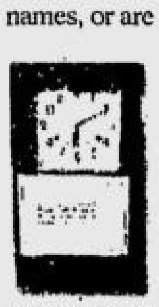
In commemoration of this long and proud history, the bank is issuing the BPI 150th Anniversary Ingot, in gold and silver. Here then is a collector's item that embodies the highest standards in banking excellence, past, present, and future.

The BPI 150th Anniversary Ingot. A historical piece. An investment worth keeping.

BE PART OF BPI's HISTORY

On the occasion of its 150th anniversary celebration next year, BPI is calling memorabilia owners to join in the search for rare items associated with early banking in the Philippines. Currently, the bank is holding a memorabilia exhibit until the end of 2001, dubbed Be Part of BPI's History. The exhibit was launched in August of this year and features old mementos on Philippine banking. As the first bank in the Philippines, BPI introduced paper money in the islands and started formal banking in Southeast Asia.

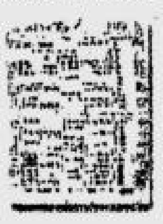
Owners of bank memorabilia who wish to donate their items to BPI, will receive special personalized gifts. The memorabilia will be properly documented to acknowledge the previous ownership(s) of the items and give due recognition to the contributors. Items of interest are those that bear the names, or are associated with, *El Banco Español Filipino* or *Banco de las Islas Filipinas* (Bank of the Philippine Islands):



BPI is also willing to accept items being lent by the memorabilia owners.

The search is open to the public. The items covered in the search are old banknotes (paper money) issued by *Banco Español Filipino* or Bank of the Philippine Islands,. 19th century checks, deposit slips, pay-slips, passbooks, certificates of deposits, stock certificates, or even photographs. The items will be featured in a special publication as well as a video presentation on the bank's history.

Interested parties may secure a pre-registration form at BPI branches or the corporate communications group at the bank's head office. Filled-out forms may be mailed or sent by fax (no. 845-5409) to the BPI Corporate Communications Department, 5th floor, BPI head office building, Ayala Avenue corner Paseo de Roxas, Makati City.



Senders whose items will be pre-selected for the grand exhibit will be notified on when to send their memorabilia. For inquiries, prospective contributors may call BPI's Corporate Communications Department at 816-9439 or 845-5710 from Mondays to Fridays.

Hard times ahead for IT in 2001

BY ERWIN LEMUEL G. OLIVA

TWO of the country's biggest business groups last week forecasted "stagflation" in 2001. Stagflation is a financial jargon that means an economic situation where high inflation (an increase of prices of domestic goods and services) and high unemployment occurs simultaneously.

Due to the political imbroglio President Estrada is mired in, economic pundits see an uncertain future beset with an expected slowdown of economic activities.

So what does this mean for the information technology industry?

Bad news but with a bit of good news.

Felipe Manalang, president of Fujitsu Philippines, believes that if the present situation (political and economic mess) drags on next year, we'll be expecting a "bearish" year in 2001. Economic pundits define a bearish year as a situation where a sector or an overall market is about to fall. Indeed, bad news for the IT industry.

"I'm hoping that Fujitsu Philippines will not be affected that much by the crises because we're exporting our services and products," remarked Manalang. He maintains that he is "cautiously optimistic" about the year 2001 because while he expects a "bad year" for the company, revenue, profit and headcount targets will be met and even exceeded next year.

His "cautiously optimistic" attitude stems from the belief that local companies, particularly the big ones, will have no choice but to invest on information technology or else risk being left behind in the information superhighway race.

Global market

Also, there is the global market that is up for grabs. That is good news.

If there is money to be made in IT next year, it will be in the global marketplace where demand for IT-related services has just increased in the last two years.

"I really don't see any big changes happening in the IT industry in general because there is a global demand for IT-related services, which is up for grabs. We're hoping to capture that demand as the country focuses on becoming the e-services hub in Asia," Toby Monsod, executive director of the Information Technology and E-Commerce Council (ITECC), told the INQUIRER. "We have been eyeing the global market when ITECC was created in the first place."

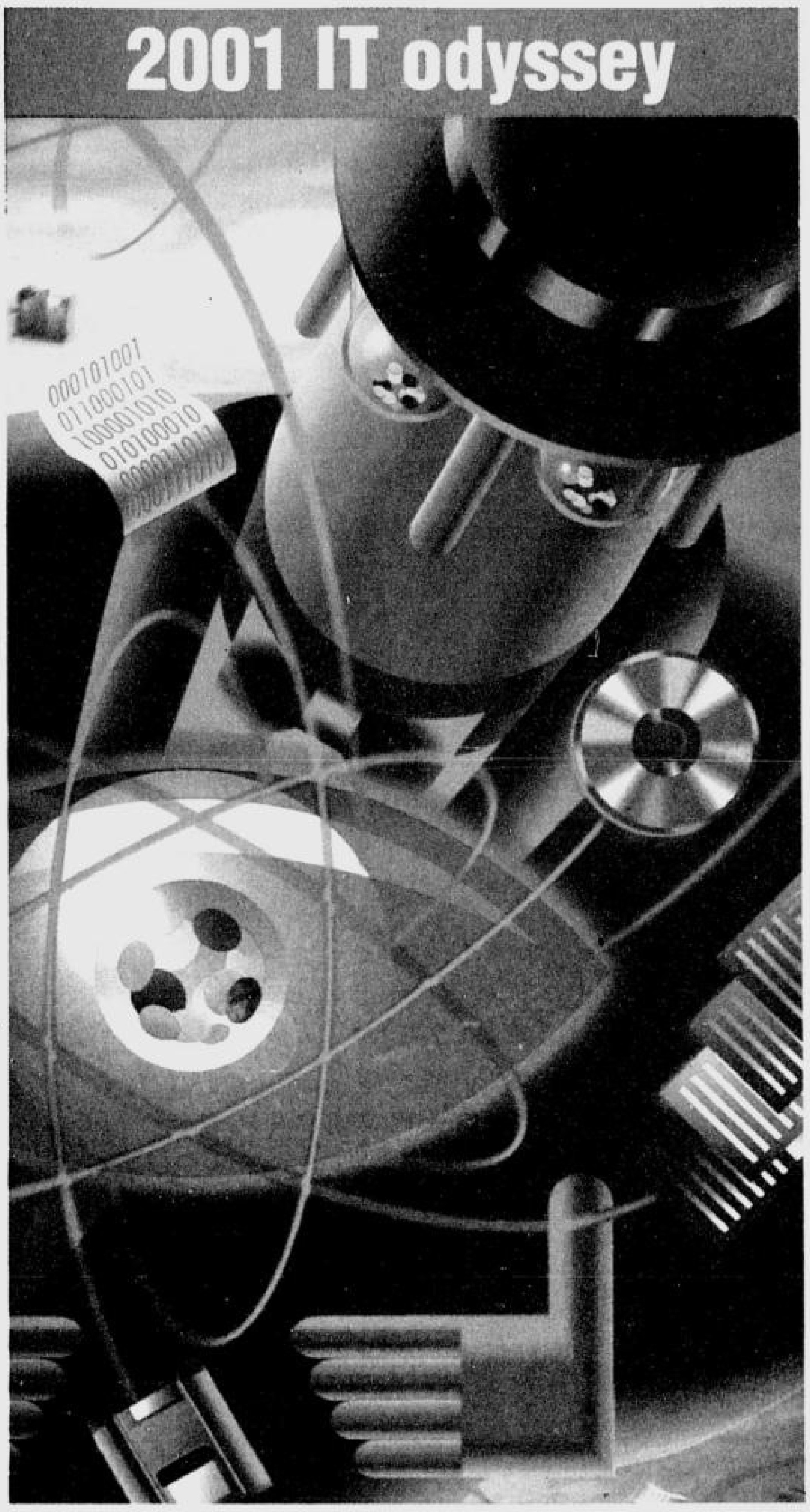
The ITECC is currently the highest IT policy-making body, which has members representing various sectors in government and private organizations.

Monsod disclosed that the ITECC next year will be "selling" the e-services hub of Asia idea in different parts of the world, including the United Kingdom, Germany, Scandinavia, Korea, Australia and India, to name a few.

Last week, the Board of Investments (BOI) said it is expecting to get a total of P1.54 billion worth of investments from 11 information technology-related service firms providing services not only to the Philippines but to the global market as well. Most of these firms are Filipino-owned.

"Government at least will do its part to help the IT sector which is primarily private-sector led," she added. Monsod admitted, though, that government was slow to realize that the IT industry opens up opportunities for local firms dying to dabble on IT-related export services—which she believes local firms are good at.

By next year, the ITECC also promises not to be distracted by the ongoing "domestic problems" because the "export market is there for the taking," Monsod said. "I think we can't forever hide under the excuse that the industry is at a standstill because of the current political and economic situation. The global market is not in recession." Still, she has the utmost respect for some members of the ITECC who have opted to join the "parliament of the streets" in reaction to calls for President Estrada's ouster.



This year, rough waves are seen smashing against IT

(Information Technology, not to be confused with Impeachment Trial)

The domestic market for IT, however, is not as bad as others have perceived it to be. The other good news is that there is money to be made locally.

"For the past years, local companies have invested time and money on buying technology. Next year, most will focus on using technology to run their business," Manalang said. In short, next year will be payback time.

Local firms, he said, will be looking at other local firms which can provide services and products in storage management, enterprise application integration and server consolidation. These markets are nothing "new," Manalang admitted, because local firms are a bit behind in embracing technology.

"Adoption of new technologies in the country usually takes two to three years," remarked Manalang. "The bulk of the business in IT next year will be in the less glamorous implementation of technology vendors had been selling."

Monsod, on the other end, said that the domestic market would benefit greatly from outsourced jobs. The challenge, however, is to lure foreign companies to outsource jobs to the Philippines. At this time, the country has to compete with India and China in this particular market.

"I think the quality of our IT professionals is better than those in other countries in terms of value-for-money," Monsod added. While Filipino IT professionals are not exactly the cheapest labor force right now, she said that they learn quickly, have better attitude toward work, and are easy to get along with—qualities that have remained unmatched.

Manalang, however, admitted that if the political and economic situation is not resolved by next year, the country will likely lose the Filipino IT professionals expected to run the show, so to speak.

Where will IT go?

Unlike the ideal separation of the Church from the State scenario, the IT sector cannot be extracted from the ongoing political and economic tight spot because IT will someday drive the country to economic prosperity.

It is, in fact, unthinkable that such an event as the ongoing impeachment trial would not claim the attention of every Filipino.

Unfortunately, some major government IT projects will be delayed, as Rep. Leandro Verceles of Catanduanes had earlier declared, since government is now "distracted" by the impeachment trial.

Still, in a not-so-ideal situation, the IT sector has remained resilient because investments in information technology will flow as companies attempt to cope with harder times. Waiting would mean demise.

"I hope local IT firms will take a longer view of things, and continue investing on IT resources—which is the people," said Manalang.

Monsod, on her part, wishes that all efforts in government and the private sector in IT would eventually fall into place next year.

"I know others have maintained a wait-and-see attitude. However, companies cannot risk to fall behind. Meanwhile, I'm betting that with the way the impeachment trial is being handled, things will normalize next year. Foreign investors are, in fact, more concerned with the way we're handling the crisis than the trial itself," Monsod said. "I really hope that whatever the outcome of the trial, Filipinos will accept the verdict. After that, we can move on."

Guilty or not guilty, the local IT industry will, however, expect harder times ahead in 2001.

Inquirer.net breaks into top 20 most visited sites

BY GERRY PLAZA

INQUIRER Interactive has breached the elite list of the 20 most visited Internet news websites in the world.

In the Dec. 28 rankings of 100hot.com, Inquirer Interactive became the only Asian site, other than The Times of India, to reach the Internet news big leagues, climbing a notch to No. 20. The Internet website of the Philippine Daily Inquirer now shares the biggest page view turnout in the world with sites of respected media organizations, including CNN, MSNBC, USA Today, Fox News, Washington Post, CNet, Discovery Channel and Yahoo News.

The site even bested other noted Web news services, including the Wall Street Journal and the San Jose Mercury News to reach this unprecedented ranking.

This week's increased page views were attributed to the real-time multimedia coverage of President Estrada's impeachment trial. In alliance with GMA Network Inc., Inquirer Interactive provides streaming Internet audio broadcast of the proceedings through radio station dzBB and a real-time video transmission of the trial via Cable GMA, the network's cable news service on Home Cable. A text-only running account of the impeachment proceedings also contributed to the higher visitor turnout for the site, as it is now the second most accessed page after the home page.

GMA Network is the Philippine Daily Inquirer's partner in the upcoming multimedia news service INQ7 Interactive.

100hot is the first directory to track the Web's most popular Internet destinations category-by-category. Its weekly rankings are based on the Internet habits of more than 100,000 websurfers around the world. Data are collected on a daily basis, with weekly reports available at http://www.100hot.com.

RP education, intellectual capital to suffer due to crisis in 2001

BY TESSA R. SALAZAR

WILL the year 2001 be another advent year for more high-power gadgetry? Will evolving technologies further thin out the dividing line between science fiction and reality? Will finer bandwidths cost less? Will the telecom wars intensify? Is IT destined to solve more medical puzzles? Will more IT rogues unleash more viruses and make cyberspace a security issue? Will President Estrada be acquitted or convicted?

While the world absorbs more technology and becomes adept at technology's use, what's in store for Filipinos of the new millennium trapped in a web of mobile interconnectivity? Will the IT industry break through the political and economic scandals drowning the nation, or will 2001 be like a douse of cold water to hell-jolt all of us into the realization that the Philippines is an IT desert where no "cyberflora and fauna" can flourish?

Rep. Leandro Verceles Jr. pictures 2001 mired in a standstill. A "wait and see attitude" will prevail, he said, "probably the entire 2001." He added that the raging political crisis would take its toll in the economy as well as cause a tempering of IT investments. And brain drain, he cautions, will get worse. Verceles warned that if these issues will not be addressed immediately, a greater proportion of intellectual power of the country will be reduced.

The biggest challenge, he said, is to drastically reduce the cost to go online.

"Cheaper leased lines and gateways will get more business activities and more investments," he said. Verceles stressed that this is the only way the country can arrest brain drain in IT.

Domestic consumption

Diversified Financial News Network Inc. (DFNN.com) president Ramon Garcia Jr., who said that DFNN will be concentrating on generating revenues from software programming, sales and consultancy from overseas clients, warned that the economy as a whole will drag down domestic consumption of products and services.

"In an uncertain climate—both political and economic—people will spend less on Capex (capital expenditure) and try to minimize Opex (operating expenses). Also, due to the political crisis, FDI (foreign direct investments) will probably be held off or suspended pending the crisis' resolution," Garcia said in an interview with the INQUIRER.

Garcia added: "For example, 'who do you negotiate with for incentives?' was one quote given to me by a foreign company. The peso depreciation will always be a double-edged sword. For exporters of IT services who earn in dollars, it will be good, but inflationary aspects of the peso depreciation will later affect these companies as well."

Garcia went on to say that if one would look at the world economy, technology and IT services would still be the "in" industries. He stressed that no other industry can claim an average of 20-percent growth per annum, as all other companies need these industries to remain competitive and efficient.

Human resources

"The education and training to increase our workers' competitiveness in this arena will need to be highlighted and addressed this year or we will lose out to other upcoming IT countries such as China, India, Russia, Belarus and—believe it or not—even Sri Lanka," stressed Garcia. Garcia, by the way, is also the director for marketing of HatchAsia.com, an incubation services firm for dotcoms.

Lawyer JJ Disini, an IT enthusiast and a specialist in cyberlaw, confirmed the possibility of a brain drain phenomenon this year. The Filipino IT worker, he said, will opt to work abroad for the "mighty US dollar, thus continuing the high turnover rate for skilled IT workers in local companies."

With brain drain threatening the country's IT resources, Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr. said he still believes the local IT industry is the strongest bet for global competition. Human resource development and networking with foreign partners to set up back-office operations will continue, he said, and this will give the "best yield with the least failure." Magsaysay said that this will pave the way for young IT practitioners and English majors, and give them more opportunities to sharpen their skills and develop self-confidence.

"The major challenge to our society is still the lack of telecoms infrastructure and its affordability, especially in the rural areas where we have a lot of potential creative and skilled young people," he said. Magsaysay stressed that the "digital divide" will continue to be a problem for 2001, citing the greater percentage of poorer parts of the country that are unable to educate its lower income youth and schools in IT.

More fearless forecasts

Disini cited other fearless forecasts: SMEs (small and medium enterprises) will engage in e-commerce; security issues will come to the fore; a brighter 2001 awaits mobile commerce and broadband will support the growth of the ASPs (application service providers).

Citing PhilBx, Disini said that SMEs will be driven largely by the B2B (business-to-business) exchanges.

"Large corporations will begin using these exchanges for procurement purposes, thereby driving their SME trading partners to participate therein," he said.

M-commerce, broadband

Disini also cited the opportunities presented by the four million GSM mobile phone users in the Philippines.

"Hence, this market is at least five times larger than the Philippine Internet population. It's a no-brainer. If you're looking to invest in 2001, M-commerce is the place," he said.

Verceles, meanwhile, predicts that the broadband and mobile sectors will continue to pick up, with the mobile sector as a "very healthy market."

"Enthusiasm for the broadband will be evident in the business industry but it won't trickle down to the commercial sector first. Broadband programs of various telecommunications companies right now are seen to focus more on the corporate business districts such as in Alabang, Greenhills and Makati," he said.

Disini, on the other hand, said that as broadband becomes more prevalent, the ASP model becomes more viable. This, he said, will bring about the outsourcing of some MIS (management information systems) services.

Meanwhile, Hewlett-Packard Philippines Corp. marketing communications specialist Cielo Narvaez shares her take on the IT industry's 2001 fate: Introduction of more PDAs (personal digital assistants), the continuous proliferation of mobile technology and mobility solutions, deeper realization of the need for "always on" Internet infrastructure and Internet data centers.

Asked which among the various areas in IT in the country would be the strongest bet this 2001, she predicted that IT appliances (handhelds that allow mobility such as PDAs, tools for the SMEs such as all-in-one printers), convergence of data and telecommunications and wireless technology would be hot.

"All of the above are parts of the three vectors of technology HP is betting on—appliances, always-on infrastructure and e-services," she said.

Overseas calls then.

9:26 p.m.
Beth! I need my allergy medicine.
Wala na kasi dito. Thanks!

SMART IDD now.

9:26 p.m.
Beth! Hi sis! Coming home for Christmas, right? Can you get my allergy medicine? They don't have it in the Philippines anymore. Thanks!

[illegible]
[illegible] tis medicine ran out too.

[illegible] m.
[illegible] eds migraine pills. Thanks!

0:43 p.m.
Luigi's asthma is acting up. Could you get an inhaler? Thanks!

11:16 p.m.
By the way, thanks for the diet pills you sent Peachy. She's really sexy now! Which is why I'm wondering if you could get me my, uh, "vitamins" for my... uh, well... you know what I mean. Heh heh!

SMART IDD

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Don't think, just call!

Just dial 00 + Country Code + Area Code + Telephone Number. For SMART GSM celfones only. List of Countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Brunei, Canada, Chile, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guam, Hawaii, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Portugal, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States of America, Vatican, Venezuela.

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North Greenhills w/ pool 45M Call 4128545

San Juan HL & TH Old Hse Call 7277506

**N Greenhills 5BR P38M LA780 FA600 T535-8356

San Juan 1589m² 30T/m² 7263336/7242047/9253072

PROVINCIAL

Tgaytay Reslhse 900m² 2hses 9120943 / 09174954373

BAGUIO 2.5M Furnished w/ car 200m² 4330417

•Barcelona Cavite•
Call:874-1301

Eagle Ridge F Dev 72 Golf 3300 /m² LA300 8421571

OTHER AREAS

Teachers Vill 409m² H/L w /off 5br/5tb 9M 928-3267

VARIOUS AREAS

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Up to 18mos Downpayment Chances to Own Car/Trip 2-4BR QC Nova Antipolo Tel 9221214/09194053902

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REAL ESTATE FOR SALE

LOT

ALABANG

Ayala Southvale 400sqm P14.8/sqm 1277-37052

LAS PINAS

Alab 400 CR LA354 @ 9,000 Neg. 8253244

BF Almanza Nr F. Route FA208m² Bn 2.7M 8253244

Ph4 Pilar Vill LA240 @ 6,000/m² Neg 8253244

VL 1600m² Angela Dr @ P10T /m² Las Pinas 9117940

MAKATI

Buendia w/ Bldg 900m² 135m² neg Rush 4128545

**AFPOVAI Fort Boni Mkti 560' P15T Call T535-8356

MANILA

**Ermita Cor Lot 880m² 28/m² Nr Escoda Call 413-4411

Sta Ana Mla Comml 3300m² P23T/m² DBO 9317898

•Acropolis Olis Paco• 300 P41T/m² DBO 7215226

MANDALUYONG

C-5 Libis nr Acro 1.8ha Sale/Lease 4128545

MARIKINA

1546m² Tangerine St. SSS V/L Pgr 1481788421

MUNTINLUPA

Alabang 400 VL LA 350m² P90T/m² 7277506

VL Alabang Hills 450sqm @ P4.5M 9-5PM 9117940

PARANAQUE

•HURRY•
Sucat Res. Lots No Down Low Monthly Tel.:8176556 8220938 Cell:09797757214

Camella Muntinlupa Lot 383sqm P1.2M 928-2497

PASAY

Roberts Nr DFA 2568sqm Mor. Sun 25K/m² 844-0130

Roxas Blvd. - 550sqm VAC @45Km² T844-0130

Prime loctn, Roxas Blvd. Pasay 4BR, flr. area 170m², 833-7713

PASIG

Condo Crisanta Towers FA114m² P4.4M 911-7940

Greenwoods LA165 5T/sqm Fac-South, Park 5347949

VL Valle Verde LA830m² @ P18M Tel. 911-7940

Alexandra 3br Mds Rm Call 5324316

Ortigas Center Infront Tek-tite 5090m² 928-3267

QUEZON CITY

• Acropolis 414m² P40T/m²
• South DBO 721-5226

• West Triangle LA434 5br
• P11.8M Direct 721-5226

847m² Gilmore 25th/m² Pgr 1481788421

**Comml. Lot West Ave 720m² Best Offer 645-3731

Commonwlth QC Coml Lot Lease P60/m² 8439211

East Canumay Valenzuela 1800m² Whse 9283267

Edsa Munoz Comml Lot 42 28m² @ 25T/m² 8439211

EDSA QC Nr Q. Ave/Timog 1650m² 35T/m² Vacant Lot 928-3267

Filinvest I QC DBL LOt Hse 400m² P5.9M 8439211

La Vista QC 1300m² Call 4383970/141211755

LGV 600m² @7,000 ² Nice 225m² 30% DP 645-3731

REAL ESTATE FOR SALE

LOT

QUEZON CITY

**Mindanao Ave. Cor 780m² Highly Comm'l. Call 413-4411

Mindanao Ave Cor Lot Nr SM Neopolitan 1000m² 9283267

New Mla Lots / Houses 7226578/7240394/150320093

SFDM 282m² cor Lot w/Old Hse 3.5M Nr. Roosevelt 9283267

SFDM Lot H&L 272-800m² 9-11T/m² 928-3267

SFDM QC 250-714m² VL 3.5M -7.5M Res/Whse 9283267

Sta Mesa Hts 480m² 11M Along Mayon Rush 413-4411

**Sta Mesa Hts Rush P8M 378m² Nr Retiro 413-4411

VL Roces Ave LA599m² @ P17.9M Tel. 911-7940

A Bonifacio 2H 20T/m² Cash /Terms 6453731

Banawe 520m² 15M cor Lot near del Monte 928-3267

Capitol Dist 600m² 3800/m² 6453731

Del Monte QC 1247m² Cor Lot Call 5324316

Loyola Grand 600m² @ P8T Call 9382343 / 6360707-JC

Nr Ateneo 600m² 7,000/m² 225m² 12T/m² 6453731

Project 2, QC 203m² V/Lot 928-3267 / 920-2001

RUSH! 2433m² Novaliches Quirino Hway before Uniwide Sale 911-4915

RIZAL

132m² VL Christine Vill. Cainta Bert 724-6201

Imelda Ave nr Sta Lucia 858m² Rush 4128545

Vista Vde Ctry H 2000@ 2.8T 9120943 / 0917-4954373

Sn Antonio Vlly, Pque nr muncpl hall 400 sq. mtr. Direct 833-7713

Tanay, Rizal near town proper 6 hctrs. Direct 833-7713/831-8485

**T&C Est VL596m² P3 9M 688m² P4.5M T911-7940

Victoria Valley VL 600+ 5000m² 2500/m² 911-7940

SAN JUAN

N. Domingo 300m² No Flood 20T/m² 6453731

PROVINCIAL

Banaba 3476m² Nr Port Pgr 1481788421

Dagot Nr Blak na Bato 450m² w/ 3Sty 928-3267

Industrial Lot 23763m² Wd Old Bldg 1481788421

Looking 3-5 Has Ind'l Calamba Expway 436-0385

Mla Southwoods 388m² 5,500/m² Pgr 1481788421

Rawland Roman Hi-way Bataan 3.4Ha 911-7940

Tagaytay 2Adj Lots 780 & 805sqm 7232391

• Tagaytay 4 Lots •
Call:874-1301

Tagaytay Country Hms1 Lot 135m² 3,200/m² 928-3267

Talisay beach property 10089m² Pgr 1481788421

•Tiaong Quezon 3.6Hec P600/m² Twn Hway 7215226

Tierra Pura Tsora LA584 FA600 P12,7M 8439211

25HA P150/m² Back EPZA Mariveles Bat. 911-7940

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REAL ESTATE FOR SALE

LOT

PROVINCIAL

4000m² Carmona Cavite 7263336 / 7242047 / 9253072

4HA @P350/m² Cabcaben Mariveles Bataan 9117940

5HA P300/sqm Camaya Mariveles Bataan 9117940

Alfonso Cavite 336m² 7263336 /7242047/9253072

Holiday Homes Lot 82m² P2700 /m² 8421571 Dpr 222909

Ind'l Lot 2356m² @P3,610 /m² Silang Cav 911-7940

VL 655m² @ P35,000/m² Sherwood Hills 911-7940

OTHER AREAS

Dasma Village Lots/Hses 7226578/7240394/150320093

Eagle Ridge LA500 Prime w/G-Shr P2.5M 5347949

Looking 400 Lot Only Tierra Pura No. 436-0385

**Comml Lot w/WH LA390m² @ P7.8M T911-7940

CONDO/TWNHSE/APT

MAKATI

Le Trionphe 2br 134m² Wd Parking Pgr 1481788421

2BR BN FA107m² P8.8M Legaspi Village 911-7940

**ASIA TOWER Nr. Gbell 2BR Sale/Rent 535-8356

**Citibank Ctr-Paseo Mktl Sale/Rent 200m² 535-8356

**Le Domaine 2br 2tb 1pkg R/S Salcedo Vill. 535-8356

Salcedo TowerII 4BR 224m 3carprk P16M neg 4121825

**Nr Don Bosco Makati Studio 1BR 535-8356

Rockwell Mktl 1br 7263336 / 7242047

Rush! Wside NMla 6419346 2br 5.9M 3br 6.9 Rush!

EASTON/ROCKWELL
Sale/Rent 09177914366. 4121825

BSA Mansion 30m² 2.8M Call 4121825 09177914366

MANILA

Antel Seaview Roxas Blvd Studio 1-3Br 928-3267

TH Roxas Blvd 3br 3TB P7.5M Telefax 911-7940

3BR/TB Mds Rm FA126 @ P5.8M Call 911-7940

PARANAQUE

Ind'l Lot 9330m² @ P15T per sqm Sucat 9117940

PASIG

Ortigas TH 120FA 4.0M 7263415 / 0917-5203990

Parc Royale Ortigas 1br RFO 4383970/9128941

Pasig Renaissance 215sqm Rush Sale 0917-8143792

Rennaisance 1br 24th Flr 1 Parking Pgr 1481788421

Alexandra Ortigas 3br 7263336 / 7242047

**Near Robinson Ortigas 1BR Call T535-8856

AIC Gold Sale / Rent 0917-7914366 / 150341394

Pasig 5br LA184 FA318 7263336 / 7242047

QUEZON CITY

•Bnew Condo Gilmore Ave 3.5M 2BR 82/m² DBO 7215226

Cubao Nr. Banahaw P4.5M FA178m² 3Sty New 4134411

Don Jose Hgts 2br 2tb 1Car Pgr 1481788421

Loyola Hts Twnhse 3br 2tb P5.2M 843-9211

REAL ESTATE FOR SALE

CONDO/TWNHSE/APT

QUEZON CITY

New Mla Th FA200 New @ 6M 7263415-0917-5203990

Panay Thse 3Sty 5Brms 2Cg Fuly Hall 9283267

Proj2 Twnhse 3br 2tb P4.2M 843-9211

Sta Mesa Hts 80m² 4.3M 3Sty w/ Deck New 4134411

Tchers Vil 3BR3TB MO Cg 4M 5323588 09195825646

Cubao Condo P1.3M "EZ"Term X'mas Promo:"Rent to Own" 9120647 9132224 4381161

CubaoCondoP7.3M
"EZ"Terms nego discounts 9120647 9132224 4381480

Nr Edsa FA64 LA50 2TB Bn Nice Loc 2.5M 6453731

P. Tuazon 2br 2tb 1Parking Parquet Pgr 1481788421

Panay Twnhse 114m² 3Sty concrete 4.7M 928-3267

Proj 4 Townhouse LA100 FA90 7263336 /7242047

SAN JUAN

• Royal View Sn Juan • P3.7M 3br 2tb 140m² 7215226

7/F. Benitez SJ P6.5M FA175 3br 1tb 911-7940

G'hills Condo 1br FA58 P3M 7232391

San Juan TH FA180 6.5M 726-3415 / 0917-5203990

AnnapolisGH Condo 3MRm 170m² nice mdrm 9283267

Nr G'Hills 2br 2tb 87m² Bn RFO Nice Loc 6453731

San Juan Twnhse 3BR 3TB 4.8M 4121825 GLB 9714366

PROVINCIAL

Th Loakan Rd Baguio 2br 2tb @ P2.2M 911-7940

OTHER AREAS

Horseshoe TH FA200 New @ 5.6M 7263415/0917-5203990

IBUNA nr. P. Guevarra 231m² 5M w/fence 9283267

MEMORIAL LOT

Heritage C-5 Fort Boni 7Lots 823-7873

Heritage Park Cash or Installment 6714421

Heritage Park Estate 40m² P2.5M Only 671-4421

Heritage Park Makati Lawn Lot P70T 671-4421

Loy Mkna Lot 8386645/52

Mem. Lot Dasma Cavite 10Lots P4,200/lot 9282497

AGRICULTURAL LANDS

Mango Orchard IBA Zamb. 68Has @750/m² 911-7940

RESORT

El Nido Beach Property 5 Has @ P500/m² 9117940

Los Banos Lot 430m² Hot Spring P4T/sqm 8439211

Los Banos Resort Hot Spring P9M 8439211

CLUB SHARE & MEMBERSHIP

Fontana Share Clark 200T/Share 928-3267

REAL ESTATE FOR RENT

APARTMENT

QUEZON CITY

Cubao 17-Door Apt. Fully Conc. Fin. 13M 6453731

HOUSE

LAS PINAS

44 CRM Rebeca B.F. Homes Almanza Las Pinas

MAKATI

Hse 3br 2tb Mds Rm 1Car P35T/mo. Tel.# 911-7940

PALM VILLAGE 3-5BR
•CALL: (0917)463-5444•

MUNTINLUPA

BN Hse 3br den attic spool P140T/mo. 911-7940

PARANAQUE

BFP 25T/Mo 3BR Ph3 8267345

Merville/Multi 2-5BR 8Tup CALL: 822-3756

QUEZON CITY

2br2tb Kipnan 18t 6819727

CONDO/TWNHSE

AIC Gold Ortigas 2br 7263336 / 7242047

Antel Platinum Mktl FF 7263336 / 7242047

MAKATI

Ayala Woodside 3br P30T 7226578/7240394/150320093

2BR Furn Heart Tower 127sqm 635-6722 • 632-7401

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BSA Condos Ricky 4378946

Manhattan Square Mktl 2br 7263336 / 7242047

Millenium Plaza Mktl 33m² 7263336 / 7242047

ROCKWELL 1-3 BR FE
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MANILA

1Br Condo Mla. P16T/Mo. 826-7345 / 825-0918

New Mla 3br 3tb 2cg w/Att Excl P35T/mo. 9317898

QUEZON CITY

Cubao 440m² FA1520 15cg 4Sty Nr SM BNew 413-4411

SAN JUAN

2BR Furn Annapolis St. P28TH 638-6146 • 635-6722

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BUSINESS RENTAL

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DivineCtr nr711&SMF'view bc d'1st Pioneer 09196018740

G/F Kalipunan Ave QC 105m² RFO 4383970/9128941

REAL ESTATE FOR RENT

BUSINESS RENTAL

Libis 33460m² Lease Bldg Pgr 1481788421

P1,800/mo. Stalls
Sn. Andres T-4006402/23

Roosevelt Ave 200m² Call 4383970 / 141211755

Trece Martinez 4Rent @ P20/m² Indl 1H 8439211

Angono 91m² Nr Market7263336 /7242047/9253072

Antel Corp. Ctr Mktl 190m² 7263336 / 7242047

Antel Global Ortigas 142m² 7263336 / 7242047

Omm Pasig 64.5m² RFO 7263336 / 7242047

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2% w/o taking car 7262780

2% w/o Taking Car 3670169

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LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the MESALA SAVINGS Acct. w/No. 10017932-4 of the late Filemon M. Pascual was extrajudicially settled & waived by his heirs per Doc. 202, Page. 42, Book XXX, Series of 2000 Before Atty. Arturo P. Peralta of Makati City. (PDI-12/ 25, 1/ 1, 8, 2000)

PERSONAL

PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT
Holy Spirit thou who make me see everything and show me the way to reach my ideal. You who give me the divine gift to forgive and forget the wrong that is done to me and who are in all instances of my life with me. I, in this short dialogue, want to thank You for everything and confirm once more that I never want to be separated from You, no matter how great the material desires may be. I want to be with You and my loved ones in Your Perpetual Glory. Amen.

CANADA

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Interested parties may personally submit their resumés and transcript of records and other documents on or before **January 8, 2001** to:

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Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
MAYNILA, PILIPINAS
SPC DISPOSAL COMMITTEE

NOTICE OF PUBLIC AUCTION

Notice is hereby given that the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) will sell motor vehicles and scrap materials. Sealed bids must be received by the Committee not later than 10:00 AM on **January 9, 2001** at Room 504, 5th Floor, Building A, BSP Security Plant Complex, East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City.

Interested parties may inspect the motor vehicles/scrap materials during regular working days from 9:00 to 11:00 AM and 1:00 to 2:30 PM at the BSP Security Plant Complex on or before **January 8, 2001**.

Forms and further information may be obtained from the Committee's Executive Officer, Mrs. Lucilla D. Coquia, Department of General Services, Room 305, 3rd Floor, Building A, BSP Security Plant Complex, East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City, Tel. No. 926-3464.

(Sgd.) NESTOR B. SALANIO
Chairman
Dec. 26, 2000
(PDI – Jan. 1, 2001)

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"From darkness let the light shine!"
Gen. 1:3

ALEJANDRO GUARIN PARAGAS

Ex-Vice Mayor of Aguilar, Pangasinan

Died in the Grace of our Lord on December 30, 2000 at the age of 80.

His wife **Benjamina**; children **Victoria** and **Ravi**, **Virginia**, **Roberto** (†) and **Manette**, **Asila** and **Gil**, **Teresita**, and **Helen** and **Reza**; grandchildren **Ravi Jr.**, **Reggine**, **Martin**, **Marco**, **Maritess**, **Michael**, **Melvin**, **Shookofi**, and **Sarah**; relatives and friends request the pious readers to join them in prayers for his lasting peace.

His remains lie in state at the Arlington Memorial Chapels, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be announced later.

"...absent with the body to be present with the Lord."
2 Cor. 5:8

Judge Manuel E. Yuzon Sr. (Ret.)

of Piddig, Ilocos Norte and Makati City

Peacefully joined his Creator on December 29, 2000 at the age of 63.

His bereaved wife **Aurora**; children **Joy**, **Bong** and **Racquel**, **Ian** and **Cristina**, **Rachel** and **Richard**; grandchildren **Aissa**, **Craig**, **Tatum**, **Ana**, **Kiko**, **Ricca** and **Reggie**; sister **Milagros**; brother **Florencio**; sisters-in-law **Mildred** and **Lily**; nephews, nieces, relatives and friends mourn his passing.

His body lies in state at the Loyola Memorial Chapels, Makati City.

Interment will be on Wednesday, January 3, 2001 at the Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City, after the 11:00 a.m. Mass at the Loyola Memorial Chapels.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.
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OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS: ❶ Copy of Death Certificate ❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

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For the needs of your departed Loved Ones the following establishments can help you.

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Let us all welcome the new year with peace in our hearts.

Have a Prosperous New Year!

From:

The Classifieds & Marketing Staff

BUSINESS*Monday*

MARGIE QUIMPO-ESPINO, Business Features Editor

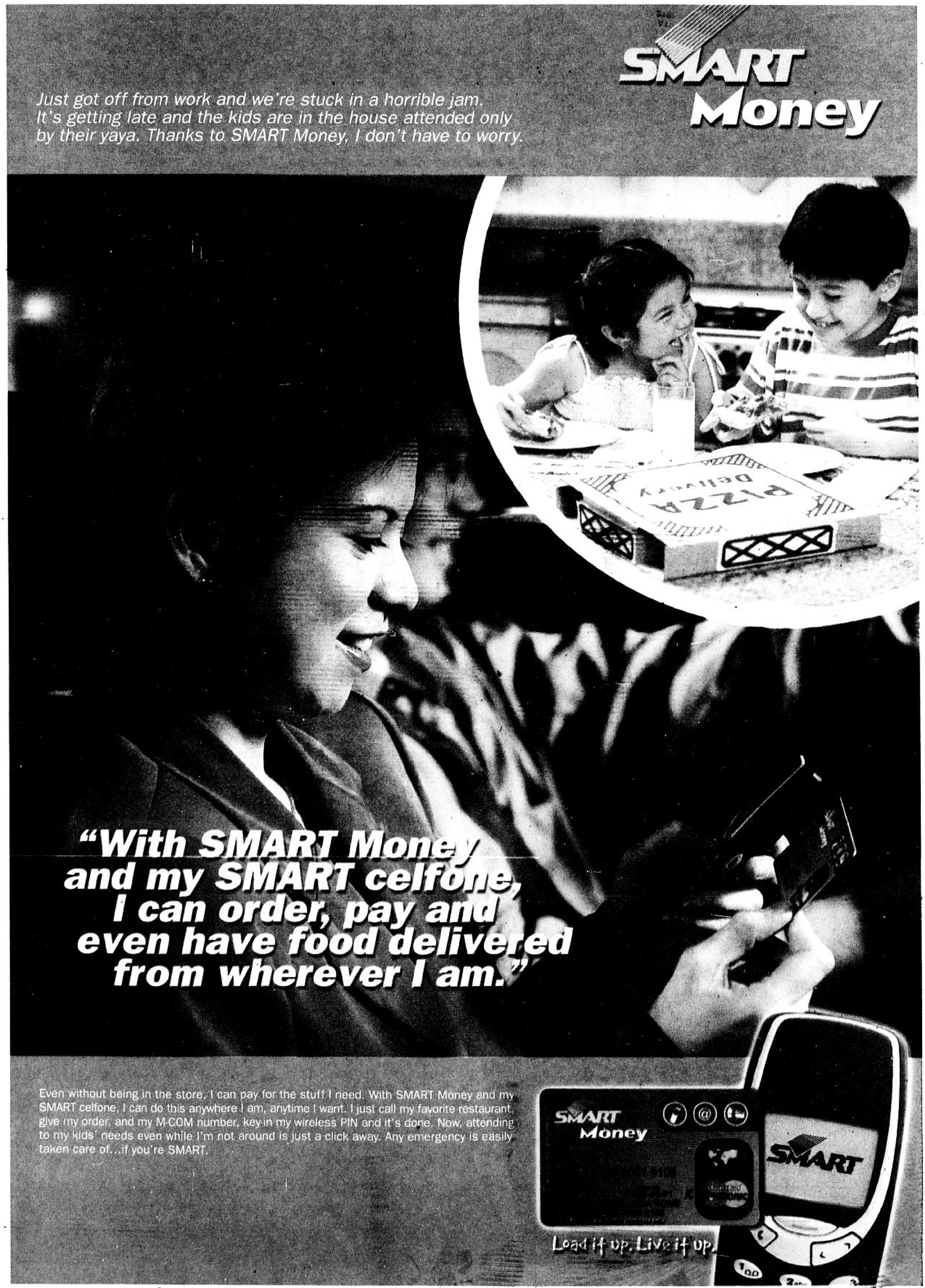
Tame the beast that is the budget deficit

THE FIRST problem the Philippines has to address to attract investors and get itself out of the economic rut is in its ballooning budget deficit, projected to reach almost P120 billion for the year 2000.

"This is the beast we had learned to tame. It has been allowed, once again, to grow out of proportion relative to agreed targets. This fact has been a contributor to the loss of confidence in the Philippine economic governance, since no one seems to be overly concerned about the deficit going by more than 50 percent of target," said Finance Chief Dr. Jesus P. Estanislao to members of the Chase Securities International Fixed Income Research Group when he was invited to discuss the political and economic outlook of the Philippines.

The group consisted of prominent foreign institutional investors who

TAME/ C4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Load it up. Live it up.

Just got off from work and we're stuck in a horrible jam. It's getting late and the kids are in the house attended only by their yaya. Thanks to SMART Money, I don't have to worry.

Even without being in the store, I can pay for the stuff I need. With SMART Money and my SMART celfone, I can do this anywhere I am, anytime I want. I just call my favorite restaurant, give my order, and my M-COM number, key-in my wireless PIN and it's done. Now, attending to my kids' needs even while I'm not around is just a click away. Any emergency is easily taken care of...if you're SMART.

All I need to know about my SMART Money

why should I get one?

because I want a cash card that lets me reload my celfone and shop from anywhere, hassle-free!

With SMART Money, you can conveniently reload your SMART Buddy celfone airtime & text credits & even shop for whatever you want with just a few clicks on your celfone.

because I don't want to stand in line for cash.

No ATMs needed. Your money comes to you. Using your celfone, you can transfer cash from your mobile bank account right into your SMART Money.

because I need total security.

Your actual cash is secured by the SMART Money system that complies with MasterCard standards. You might lose your card, but never your money.

because I control my spending.

Know exactly where your money goes. With SMART Money and your celfone, you can monitor your card balance and track your purchases.

because I want to shop anywhere.

Use your SMART Money in places that don't accept credit cards and in all MasterCard Electronic establishments nationwide.

because I want to have fun.

Now, you can shop in bazaars, play in arcades & watch your favorite movies with SMART Money!

how do I get my SMART Money?

Both the SMART Money SIM and cash card come free with the purchase of a new SMART celfone kit.

If you're already a SMART GSM subscriber, you can check if your SIM card supports SMART Money.

Just look for this MBS marking at the back of the SIM:

If you already have an MBS SIM, simply fill out the SMART Money info sheet at any SMART Telecenter and get your SMART Money Card for FREE.

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To find out whether your handset is a phase 2 plus celfone, just call SMART Money Hotline at 845-7777, visit any SMART Telecenter or click the SMART website at www.smart.com.ph.

NO NEED TO APPLY!

SMART Money's unique celfone and cash card linkage lets you enjoy all these with just a few clicks from your SMART celfone! It's simply the most convenient way to pay!

SMART Money

how do I use my SMART Money?

TO ENJOY YOUR SMART MONEY FOLLOW THESE SIMPLE STEPS:

How do I activate my cash card?

step 1
Go to SMART MENU and select SMART MONEY.

step 2
Key in your 12-digit MCOM number found on your SMART Money card and press OK.

step 3
Key in your default W-PIN (123456) and press OK.

step 4
You will receive a confirmation message and be advised to change your W-PIN to protect your SMART Money.

How do I load cash into my SMART Money?

To reload over the counter:

step 1
You can put any amount in your SMART Money card through SMART Money Loading Centers.

step 2
Upon receiving cash, the cashier swipes your card and gives you a transaction record.

step 3
Now your SMART Money is loaded and you're ready to go! For maximum reloading convenience, use your celfone to load cash in your SMART Money card straight from your Mobile Bank Account.

How do I load airtime and text credits on my SMART Buddy celfone?

step 1
Go to the SMART MENU and select SMART BUDDY.

step 2
Select RELOAD and press OK.

step 3
If you want to reload your own SMART Buddy celfone, select MY BUDDY and press OK. If you want to reload another celfone, select OTHERS, key in the recipient's SMART Buddy celfone number and press OK.

step 4
Key in your W-PIN and press OK.

step 5
You and the recipient will receive a text message confirming the amount successfully loaded.

how do I make a purchase?

Your card must be activated and loaded with cash value before it can be used to purchase goods and services. Simply present your SMART Money to the cashier. The cashier swipes your SMART Money and you'll receive a sales slip. Sign it, and you're off!

For deliveries, simply call the store, place your orders and give your MCOM number. You'll then receive a text message to confirm your purchase. Authorize your transaction with your W-PIN and you're done!

SMART Money

Mobile Banking + SMART Money. The future of payment.

Enjoy the full convenience of SMART Money with SMART's Mobile Banking service. When your SMART Money card is supported by SMART Mobile Banking, you can load cash value into your SMART Money—right from your celfone! It's like having your own personal ATM—anytime, anywhere!

how do I load SMART Money thru SMART Mobile Banking?

You have to be a registered Mobile Banking depositor of any of the member banks in the SMART Mobile Banking Service.

1. Using a SMART GSM celfone, go to SMART Menu and select SMART Money.
2. Click Reload.
3. Choose an amount.
4. Key-in the M-PIN code of your Mobile Bank account.
5. You will receive a text confirmation and you're done!

The SMART Mobile Banking Service members are: 1st e-Bank, Dao Heng Bank, East West Bank, Equitable-PCI Bank, Export & Industry Bank, Global Bank, International Exchange Bank, Metrobank, Planters Development Bank, Premiere Development Bank and Union Bank.

Ask your bank about Mobile Banking for SMART Money reloading now!

Get the most out of your SMART Money SIM card!

YOUR OWN [illegible]
You will never shop alone again! With your new SMART Money SIM comes your own [illegible] that you can take everywhere.

MORE SURPRISES!
Personalize your SMART Money card so you can join the Rewards Program. Earn points and exchange these for prepaid airtime, text credits & more!

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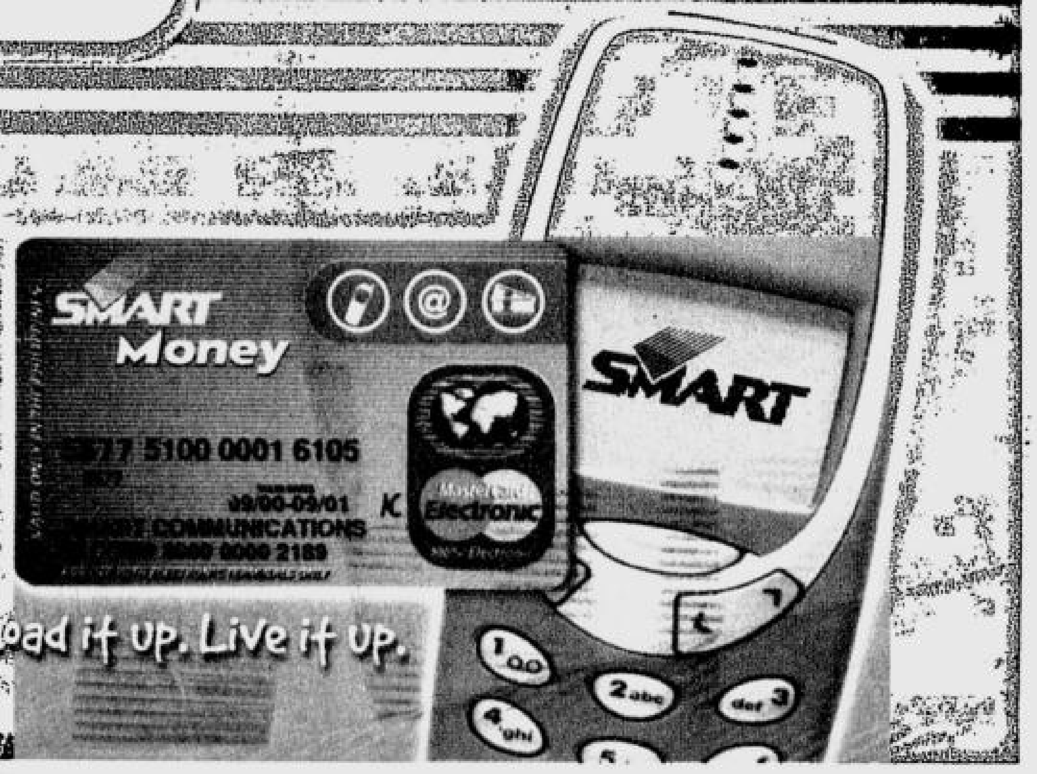

The voucher system–a radical option to fix our creaky basic education system

MAPPING THE FUTURE

Ricardo S. Pascua

ACQUIRING a good education is becoming increasingly expensive. The tuition and school fees for primary and secondary education from the private schools have been rising almost every year. Many Filipino parents, however, exert efforts and squeeze budgets to be able to send their children to the best private schools they can afford with the hope that their children can acquire a better education.

The option, of course, is to send children to public schools. But, would you send your children to our public schools? Many of you would say: "No, because we don't trust the public educational system."

This lack of trust evidently stems from the inadequacy and the poor quality of education offered by the overwhelming majority of our public schools.

The parents' desire to prepare their children for a highly competitive and demanding environment cannot be matched by the education provided by the public school system. Today's students must indeed be prepared to adjust quickly to the modern developments in all aspects of knowledge, but more importantly in the information and communications technology fields to be competitive.

The need for parents to inculcate competitiveness and preparedness among our children is more pronounced at present with the advent of the global economy. The new way of thinking spurred by globalization and the parameters on which these sets of thinking are developed require better tools and methods of education that, understandably, the public school system cannot as yet provide.

But why should parents pay for private education when part of their taxes ought to have paid for it already? When parents send their children to private schools, they really pay taxes twice.

I believe that an option in the form of a tax-funded voucher system must be offered by the government to parents in order to give them the flexibility to choose the kind of education their children should acquire.

Once they pay their taxes, parents with school-age children will be given non-transferable, non-commutable vouchers in accordance with the number and ages of their children, which can be redeemed at any accredited educational institution of their choice.

The voucher system as applied in acquiring education is already a widely accepted concept. Developed countries such as Canada, Sweden, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Japan employ the voucher system. Even developing countries such as Puerto Rico, Guatemala, Bangladesh, Belize and Lesotho have their own voucher systems in acquiring primary and secondary education.

In the United States, the state of Milwaukee is the prime mover in implementing the educational voucher system. Chile, however, has been cited as having one of the best models of the voucher system in the world.

Each country evidently has its own version of the voucher system, its own rationale, its range of recipients, its regulatory practices and forms of achievements. These are nitty-gritty matters that can be addressed once the principle of shifting to the voucher system has been accepted as the best means by which government can fulfill its constitutional mandate to give each and every Filipino child free access to basic education.

Benefits resulting from the voucher system, I am convinced, will be far-reaching. The most immediate of which will be the pressure the system will exert on the public school system to be responsive and competitive as parents are given choices on where to send their children to school unhampered by lack of money.

The need for government to provide for public school buildings, facilities and amenities will also be reduced as private initiatives can assume the funding for the required infrastructures. With the parents seeking quality education for their children, even the private educational system will engage in elevating its standards to meet the demands of these economically empowered parents.

The voucher system will, therefore, not only reduce the parents' costs of education for their children, but will also manifest government's responsiveness to the changing and growing needs of the people and modern society.

And the government can fulfill its responsibility to provide its people the basic human right to education better and more effectively. It could also be much cheaper for the government to do so.

The present system of free basic education through the public schools offers a very limited choice to parents. Parents must be given the freedom to choose the kind of education they want to give their children. But not at the cost of having to pay twice for it. The educational voucher system is indeed the answer to satisfy the ends of both government and its people.

(This article reflects the personal opinion of the author who is president for 2001 of Management Association of the Philippines and president and CEO of Metro Pacific Corp. and Fort Bonifacio Development Corp. MAP Secretariat and the author may be reached via mapsec-@globe.com.ph)

Privacy, security, censorship among upcoming Net challenges

NEW YORK—As the Internet loses its new-car smell, governments in the United States and abroad are under increasing pressure to tackle the tough issues a wired world presents.

The Year 2001 is likely to see a greater emphasis on protecting personal privacy and making the medium safe—not only for children by protecting them from pornography, but also for online businesses by guarding Internet-linked computers from hacker attacks.

And because the Internet is global, countries cannot pretend to try to regulate it alone. Tackling borderless crimes and helping bring the rest of the world online will increasingly fall on international bodies.

The global Internet population is approaching 400 million this year. More and more people are relying on the medium for entertainment, research and commerce. Americans can now connect through some 95 percent of the nation's schools and more than 75 percent of its public libraries.

"Now that everyone has it, everyone can be startled by it," said Adam Powell, vice president for technology and programs at The Freedom Forum, an Arlington, Virginia, group that promotes free speech.

Though parents have worried for years about their children stumbling upon pornography online, Powell said increased access means more schools and libraries will be under pressure to install filtering software.

Critics say such software is inexact and can also block educational resources on such topics as breast cancer.

Internet pioneer Vinton Cerf fears censorship efforts will increase abroad as some governments try to limit the information accessed on their soil.

Already, China is trying to block foreign sites from its citizens. Last month, a French court ordered US-based Yahoo! to prevent Nazi memorabilia sold on Web auction pages from being viewed over the Internet in France. Such material is legal in the United States.

"We have a lot of education to do to get people to understand that censorship is not a wise strategy," Cerf said. "Enforcing such a thing on the Net strikes me as hard."

Regarding privacy, Congress will be under pressure to adopt protections for consumers. Meanwhile, the World Wide Web Consortium, which is sort of like the Internet's highway administration, will continue work on techniques to help users limit information they give to sites.

Privacy concerns reached new heights in 2000 with the revelation that Internet advertising firm DoubleClick could link a vast database of names and consumer buying habits with online information that Internet users previously believed to be anonymous.

Later in the year, online retailer Toysmart.com proposed selling its closely held customer list after filing for bankruptcy protection, but federal regulators barred the move.

The FBI also took heat over an e-mail surveillance tool known as Carnivore that captures email as it moves through computers at Internet service providers.

New threats to privacy in 2001 include emerging wireless devices that could permit companies to track users via global-positioning satellites and other techniques.

Also likely to come next year are new ways of breaching network security. Stephen Trilling of antivirus vendor Symantec Corp. expects viruses that can mutate to bypass detection and viruses that will target wireless devices.

Leading companies and sites learned in 2000 that they weren't immune. Hackers blocked millions of Internet users from Yahoo! and other sites by tying them up with junk traffic, while the spread of the "I Love You" computer virus caused tens of millions of dollars in damage.

Investigators in the Philippines weren't able to prosecute their chief suspect in the "I Love You" hack because the country had no law governing computer crimes. Although that nation quickly passed a law to cover future attacks, most countries still lack such legal protections.

McConnell International, a technology consulting group, recently found that only nine of the 52 countries it surveyed had criminal laws to cover at least six of the 10 major computer-related crimes.

The 41-nation Council of Europe has drafted an international treaty to cover the destruction of data and other Internet crimes, but civil libertarians and computer industry officials have expressed concern that it gives law enforcement agencies too much intrusive power.

Harris Miller, president of the Information Technology Association of America in Arlington, Virginia, said international norms would be required as well to address commerce.

"The whole issue of where consumers are on the Internet is going to be more heated," he said. "If a consumer gets involved in a dispute with a merchant, whose laws apply?"

The entertainment industry, meanwhile, will continue grappling with copyright issues. The industry won a preliminary injunction in 2000 to shut down Napster, the music-sharing service, but as more homes get high-speed broadband connections, movie-sharing services could emerge.

Hollywood still has not determined how it can protect the movies it would like to distribute online from piracy.

Other developments in 2001 should include:

- A review on Internet taxes in the United States, as a current congressional ban expires in October 2001.
- A decision by a federal appeals court on whether a lower court US judge rightfully declared Microsoft Corp. a monopoly that must be split into two parts.
- The appearance of seven new domain names in midyear—.info, .biz, .name, .pro, .museum, .coop and .aero. They join the familiar .com, .net, .edu and .org in Net addresses.

The body that approved the names, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, could face a serious rebellion in 2001 over its authority to administer all domain names.

Some operators of country-specific domain names, such as .uk for the United Kingdom, are refusing to pay their ICANN dues. And China is rebelling against the Internet's naming structure altogether, insisting that it has exclusive rights to register domain names in Chinese.

Meanwhile, tests are planned next year to extend Internet access to outer space. Cerf, the Internet pioneer developing new technologies at WorldCom Corp., hopes to have the software protocols ready for the 2003 launch of robot rovers to explore Mars.

The Year 2000 also marked the effective closure of the gender gap in the United States as women reached parity with men online. But an access gap still exists between whites and minorities, and between Americans and the rest of the world.

AP

Get people to put in more than the required hours into a challenging project

BY TINA ARCEO-DUMLAO

NOBODY believed Danilo E. Ignacio, president of Philam Properties Corp., when he said he would be able to complete the Philamlife Tower Building in two years and within the budget of P5 billion.

Ignacio took it as a challenge and worked with his staff to meet the deadline. By December last year, he was not only able to complete the building on time, but his group was able to do it under budget.

MANAGEMENT STYLES

The Philamlife Tower along Paseo de Roxas in Makati City now stands as one of the most modern office buildings in Makati, housing the local headquarters of some multinational companies.

What is even more remarkable is that his group also put up six office buildings of the Philam group in Alabang, Davao, General Santos, Cagayan de Oro, Dagupan and Tacloban almost at the same time.

Just before Philamlife, Ignacio completed the construction of the P1.7 billion 33-story Citibank Tower Building. It was also completed on time and within the budget, earning him the nickname "Tower King."

Ignacio attributes the successful completion of these multi-billion projects to an ability to get people to commit themselves to a project and dedicate even more than the required hours during the week to meet the set deadlines.

"What is important is to first make the goals clearly understood by the people. If they know the goals, it is quite natural for them to dedicate their time and effort to meeting deadlines," Ignacio says.

Ignacio says he and his group, most of whom are not regular employees, first agree on a schedule to develop a sense of ownership to the project. Their commitment is also developed from the start of the project.

"I am lucky that I get the right kind of people for the job. I want dedicated and responsible people who know what they are supposed to do," he explains.

These people, he says, work even through weekends and holidays if a project is ongoing. They work with no thought of getting extra compensation at the end of the project. They feel that building a good product is enough motivation.

He, however, says that the board of directors or senior management of the companies he works for sometimes give bonuses upon completion of the projects. Sometimes, they also give awards to recognize people who put in their 100-percent effort.

"We don't promise the people anything but if management is happy, then they give something more than their compensation. But they don't expect this at the start of the project," Ignacio says.

IGNACIO

He is particularly proud of the Philamlife Tower as the City of Manila recognized the project for its outstanding safety record. It was also judged as the safest building construction project by the association of Makati building owners.

The project did not suffer any major accident during the construction.

He adds that people in the construction business are mostly committed people because they can leave a legacy.

"People in the construction business can point to the building and tell their children and grandchildren that they helped build that project," Ignacio explains.

Ignacio still has a lot of buildings to call his own as he oversees all the real estate projects of the giant Philamlife group. He is responsible for development, marketing, project management and property management.

Prior to working at Philam Properties, Ignacio was vice president in Citibank N.A. and business manager of the Citibank Tower Building project, the new headquarters of Citibank in Makati.

Ignacio is an electrical engineer by profession, graduating in 1970 from the Mapua Institute of Technology. He graduated cum laude. He topped the board examination for assistant electrical engineers the next year with a rating of 95 percent.

"Completing projects on schedule has become more than a challenge for me. It has become a passion," Ignacio says.

Tame the beast that is the budget deficit

(From page C1)

comprise the largest holders of Asia fixed income assets from the United States and Europe. These investors have an explicit interest in the Philippines.

The second point Estanislao made was oil pricing. In the wake of the big rise in international oil prices, there is now an attempt to get government involved in oil-sourcing and in other capital-intensive aspects of oil supplying. Estanislao noted that this could have serious implications on the fiscal position of the government. He lamented that the old policy framework to actively protect, intervene and use public resources to offset the consequences of market forces is back.

The third point he made was the focus of the government on putting its "export hopes on electronic items with no follow-up strategy to dynamically exploit new niches in a very dynamic sector." He noted that advocates of the Philippine economy, as opposed to economists, "rhapsodize over our export performance even during the height of the East Asian financial crisis," while forgetting to put in place an appropriate strategy and coherent policy to build on our advantage.

Estanislao said "the change in macroeconomic risk management, after the crisis, is the broad acceptance that a more flexible exchange rate regime should be observed."

Currently, he said the Philippines is actively engaged in policy dialogues with other economies in East Asia on mechanisms for eventual regional cooperation in macroeconomic risk management, including the area of less volatile, more flexible exchange rate management in the region.

Much of the loss of investor confidence according to Estanislao can be traced to the actions and events, which highlighted the imperative for corporate governance reforms.

He noted that disclosure standards have been low, institutional structures have been weak, protection of non-controlling shareholders have been limited or non existent. In addition, the political culture, the court system and even the reputational agents have been stuck in their old practices that are sympathetic to a power elite.

However, the demands of an open economy have taken their toll and there is a need to come up with reforms on corporate governance. The Philippines, for example, has started to take a more systemic approach to reforms in this very critical area.

To date, new laws have been passed which favor these reforms. Both the Department of Finance and the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas have been at the forefront of promoting these reforms.

Through the Institute of Corporate Directors of the Philippines, which he chairs, director education is currently being conducted. Moreover, codes of best practices, codes of conduct, a statement of duties and prerogatives of directors have been formulated.

At its very recent Open Conference on Corporate Governance in East Asia held in Cebu, a framework corporate governance scorecard had been formulated and adopted by representatives of the Institute of Directors in East Asia. This is to be promoted among banks, publicly listed companies, fund managers, and investment analysts so that market pressure for corporate governance reforms can be strengthened especially on those institutions which have potentially big moral hazard.

Estanislao said "the ground has been prepared for a serious initial effort at corporate governance reforms." However, the leadership of the country and the economy (particularly the DOF and BSP) play a critical role in fast-tracking the implementation of reforms. A post-impeachment policy attitude of "more of the same" will bring no genuine change. "If there is a radical shift toward rapid pursuit of genuine reforms that can restore confidence in the economy, then the ground now being prepared for corporate governance reforms can become fertile and productive of results," Estanislao concluded.

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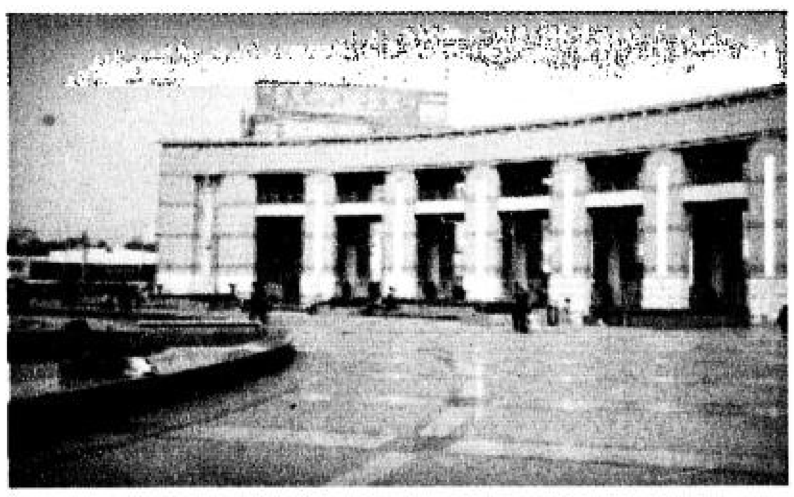
MONDAY, JANUARY 1, 2001 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER D1
LIFESTYLE
CHELO BANAL-FORMOSO, Editor ■ LITO B. ZULUETA, Subsection Editor
Arts Design

Which is the only formula scientifically proven to make your baby smarter?
ASK YOUR PEDIATRICIAN TODAY.
MeadJohnson

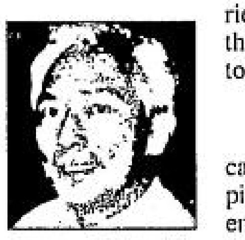


A MODERN ceremonial entrance portico stands as the transition from the congested commercial district of Jinan City in China to the wide, open space of the main city square.

Crossing over or making arrivals is a psychological and design issue

The art of passage

SPACED OUT



Augusto F. Villalon

THE ACT of crossing over from one place to the next makes for memorable occasions, but in daily life, we hardly ever notice how we go through so many entrances and exits every day. It's a daily occurrence that most of us take for granted. On the other hand, there are others to whom entrances are supremely important: making the right entrance is the essence of their lives.

To the architect, an entrance is a problem that must be solved in the design of a structure, one of the basic components in the organization of any façade. However, he knows that an entrance means much more than just making an opening in a wall that lets people through. The psychological importance often attached to an entrance spells either architectural success or design ruin.

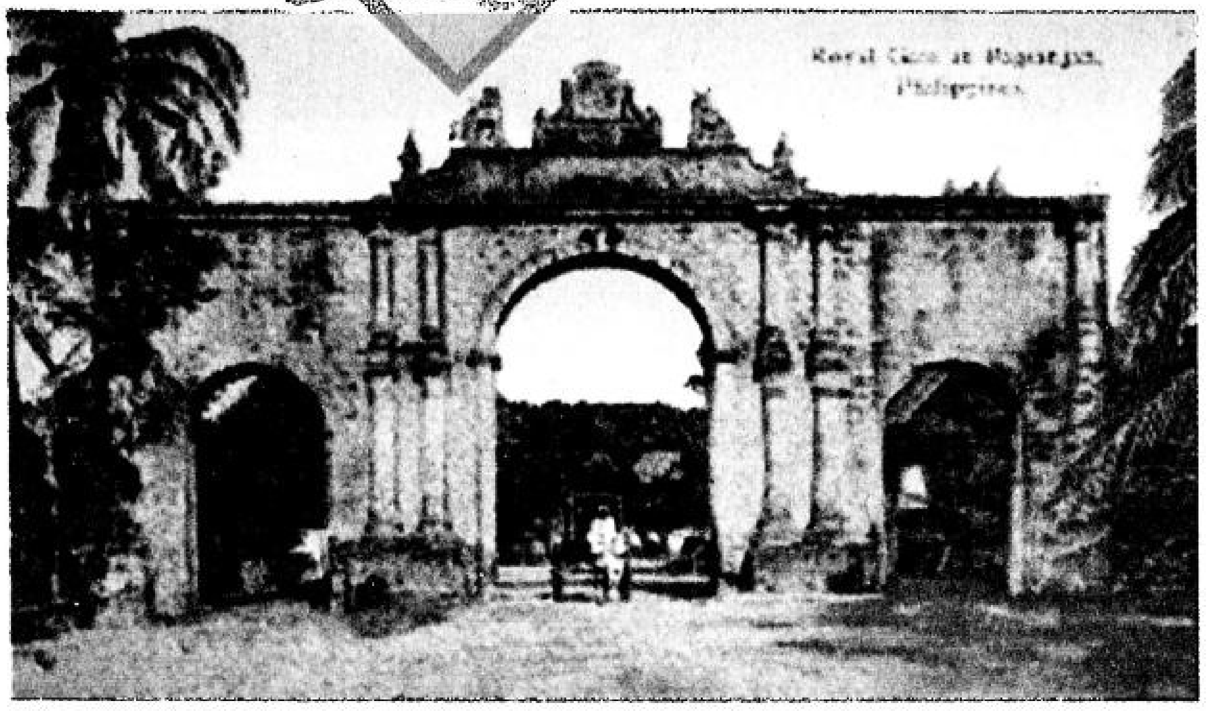
Whether humble or grand, an entrance is simply a transition point, a passage that is also visual or psychic marker designating the physical activity of crossing over from one environment into another. It highlights the physical, symbolic, or ritualistic action of having come from here to there, of having arrived somewhere or of having left for someplace else.

Arrival may be the operative word here. Arrivals take many forms and imply diverging types of crossovers. There definitely is an interesting psychology to entrances.

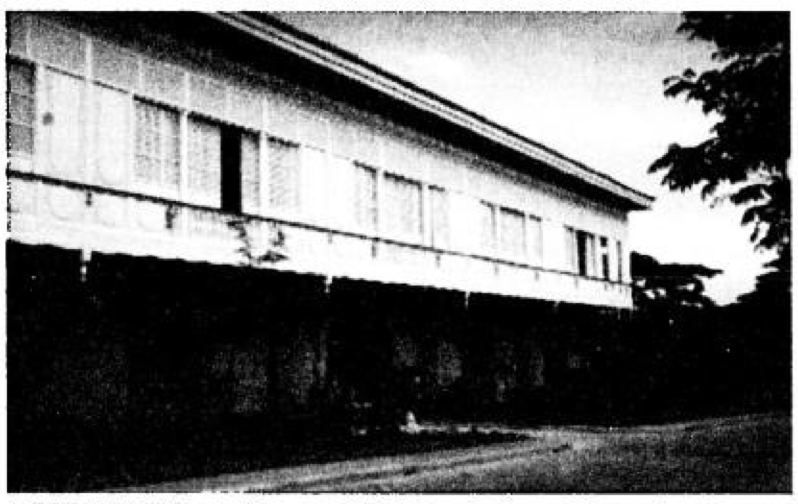
An entrance need not be a physical passage. It may be a ceremonial passage that commemorates an event. The Arc de Triomphe in Paris, a commemorative arch visible in differently angled perspectives from the many avenues that radiate from it, is experienced in full grandeur when seen dead center from its two main façades that face the broad Champs Elysées or the avenue de la Grande Armée. It is not really an entrance but it makes successful use of the monumentality of an entrance archway to proclaim Napoleonic victories and the glorious entrance of the French Empire into world history.

Vatican grandeur

On the other hand, an entrance can psychologically evoke grandeur, piety and many other feelings. The entrance to Saint Peter's Basilica in the Vatican is both an architectural and psychological extravaganza, an event of events. As if the imposing entrance portico to the basilica itself was not grand enough, the now familiar vista of the colonnade around the entrance piazza was added long after the completion of the basilica. Designed by the great Italian architect of the Baroque period, Borromini, an elliptical colonnade of two arms was grafted to the façade, with the straight legs of the question mark-shaped colonnade shooting toward the main avenue that approaches the basilica from the riverbank. It is a composition of complex visual, ritualistic and emotional significance, resembling a pair of outstretched arms that embrace the pilgrim but keep him in awe of God as he approaches the basilica door. As one walks under the colonnade, the double row of oversized, tall columns seem to march in steady cadence, humbling the pilgrim in preparation for his arrival at his spiritual destination.



DURING THE EARLY years of the 20th century, the entrance archway to Pagsanjan, Laguna demarcated a change from the dusty provincial highway to the elegant Calle Real flanked on both sides by the *baha,' na bato* where town principalia resided.



A FORBIDDING set of heavy wooden doors opens reluctantly, restricting entrance to a *bahay na bato* only to those known to the owners.

In contrast to the western manner, the visual and architectural impact of Angkor Wat in Cambodia prepares its pilgrims for spiritual experience in a different way. The drama of Angkor Wat unfolds quietly with a power that seems to take on force as one enters deeper and deeper into the temple complex. A wide, straight causeway appears to float over the moat that encircles the outer temple wall. It passes through a gate into the first of a series of inner enclosures. The walk continues to glide through the massive stone structure, passing through a series of solid stone gateways with the gentlest of relief carving in stone, until the inner temple is reached. The walk is slow, it is a procession from the bright, tropical outdoors into the dark depths of the temple, cleansing worldliness out of the pilgrim as he makes his way into the inner sanctum to reclaim his spirituality.

The entrances of cities symbolize the temporal power of government. In the medieval era of walled cities, the city gate signaled the passage into the safety of a tightly guarded environment within the walls. Intramuros and other fortified cities such as Cartagena de Indias in Colombia were entered by crossing drawbridges over moats after which people, horses and carriages passed under embellished portals, as they

THE ART/ p.D4

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Peace
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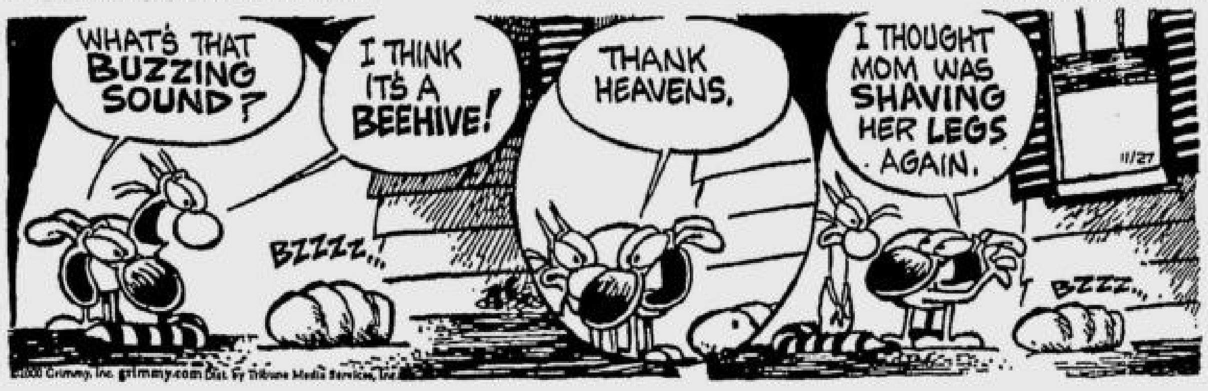
COMIC Relief

MOTHER GOOSE & GRIMM

BY MIKE PETERS


WHAT'S THAT BUZZING SOUND?
I THINK IT'S A BEEHIVE!
BZZZZ...
THANK HEAVENS.
I THOUGHT MOM WAS SHAVING HER LEGS AGAIN.
BZZZ...
11/27
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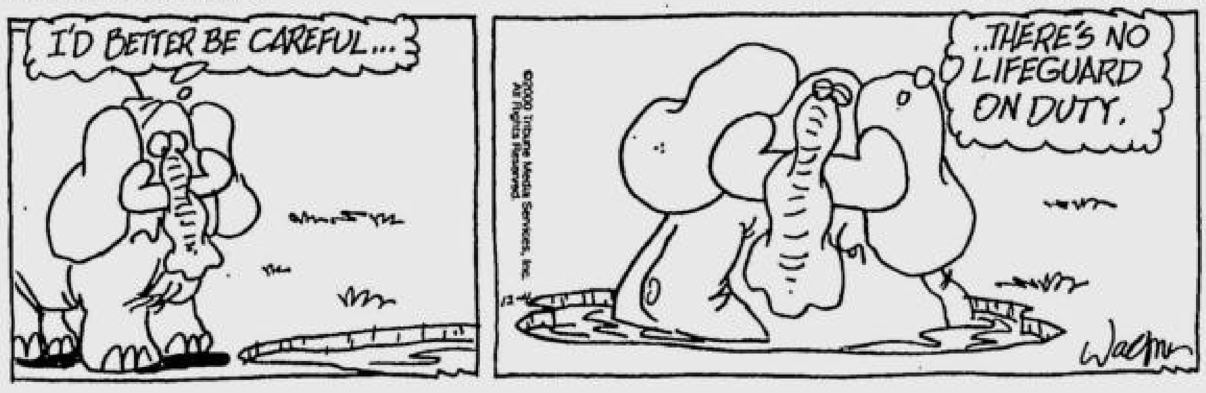
ANIMAL CRACKER

BY FRED WAGNER


I'D BETTER BE CAREFUL...
...THERE'S NO LIFEGUARD ON DUTY.
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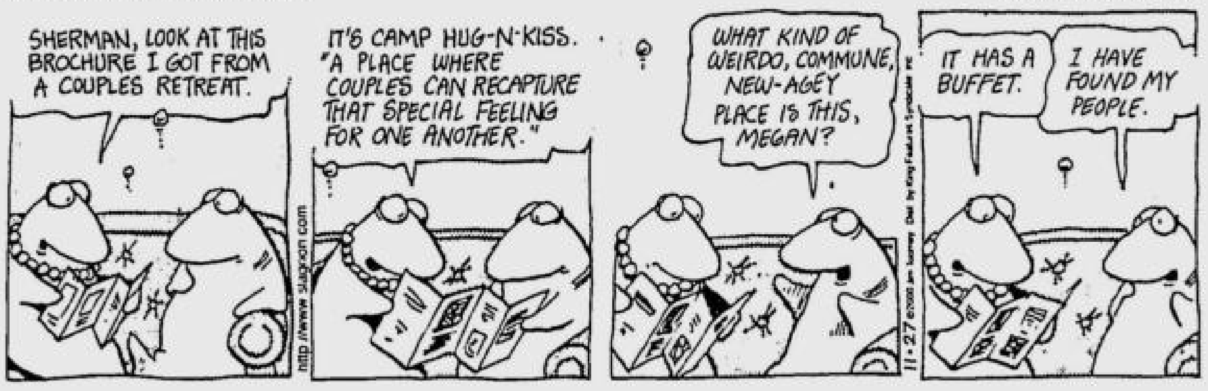
Wagner

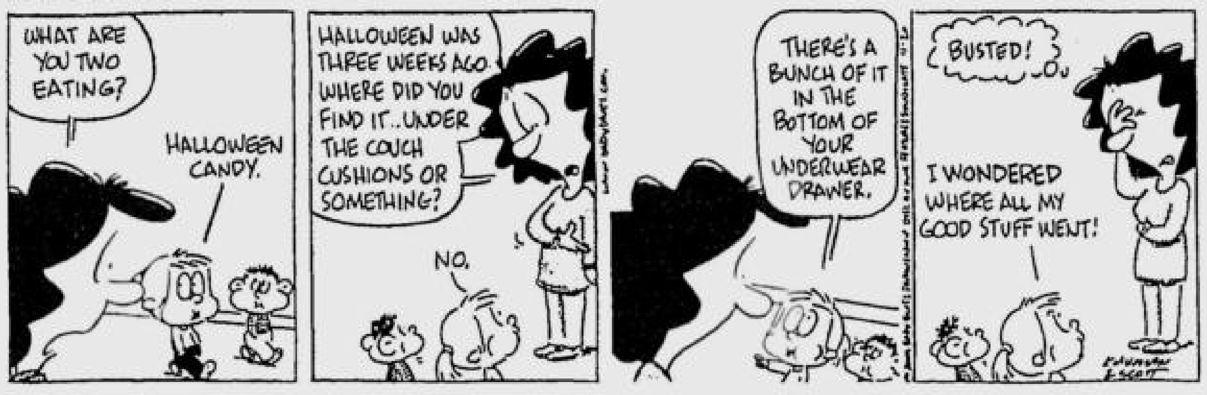
SHERMAN'S LAGOON

BY JIM TOOMEY


SHERMAN, LOOK AT THIS BROCHURE I GOT FROM A COUPLES RETREAT.
IT'S CAMP HUG-N-KISS. "A PLACE WHERE COUPLES CAN RECAPTURE THAT SPECIAL FEELING FOR ONE ANOTHER."
WHAT KIND OF WEIRDO, COMMUNE, NEW-AGEY PLACE IS THIS, MEGAN?
IT HAS A BUFFET.
I HAVE FOUND MY PEOPLE.
http://www.slagoon.com
11-27

BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


WHAT ARE YOU TWO EATING?
HALLOWEEN CANDY.
HALLOWEEN WAS THREE WEEKS AGO. WHERE DID YOU FIND IT...UNDER THE COUCH CUSHIONS OR SOMETHING?
NO.
THERE'S A BUNCH OF IT IN THE BOTTOM OF YOUR UNDERWEAR DRAWER.
BUSTED!
I WONDERED WHERE ALL MY GOOD STUFF WENT!
KIRKMAN SCOTT

HOROSCOPE

BY EUGENIA LAST

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Rocky Graziano, Rick Hurst, Betsy Ross, Barry Goldwater, Frank Langella, Lexi Randall

Happy Birthday: Your creative side will lead the way this year. Don't be afraid to venture down the road less traveled. You will inspire and influence others, so be vocal and pursue leadership in all that you do. You will be strong, persuasive and determined this year and if you put forth your best efforts, you will reap the rewards as the year comes to a close. Your numbers: 4, 8, 15, 42, 44, 48

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Get off to an early start. This will be a great day to make those professional changes you've been contemplating. You can dodge disagreements with loved ones if you keep busy. Your fiery nature will spark enthusiasm in others.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): You should look into ways to make yourself the best you can be, with a new look, a new image. Your confident attitude will help you get what you want.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): You may want to make a few alterations to your living quarters today. Don't overspend on luxury items; you can make a big difference using what you've already got.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): You will meet interesting new people. Your ability to communicate and get along with others will result in lasting friendships. Cultural groups will be enticing.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Put your efforts into moneymaking ventures. You will be able to make professional changes and get involved in joint financial deals that will bring you extra cash.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Don't let your heart interfere with your important decisions. You will have to put your personal life on the back burner if you want to make the most of your day.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): You should tie up loose ends. Deal with government agencies or officials who will help you obtain the proper paperwork to complete your latest project.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): You can ask for help and promote your ideas today. Don't hesitate to say what's on your mind. You will have the attention of those in a position to do something.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Someone you least expect may be watching you from a distance. Don't be afraid to go after your objectives. You will be able to expand your horizons if you aren't timid in your approach.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Your dearest friends may be in a tight spot today. You can offer good solutions if you take the time to help. Your philosophy will enlighten those you come into contact with.

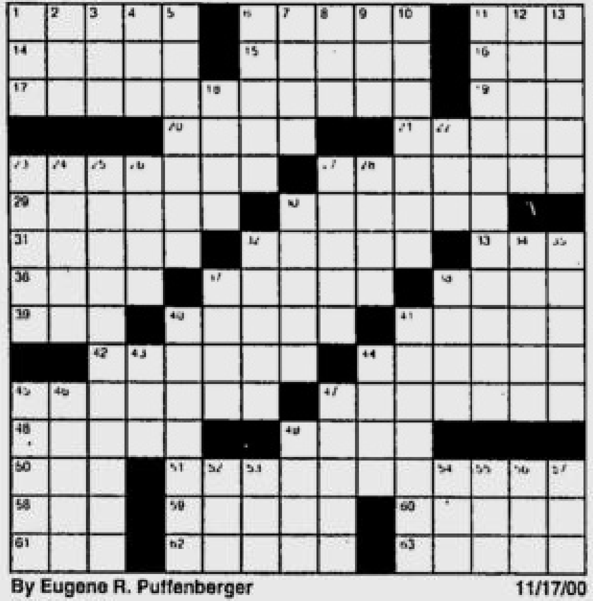
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): You should be looking into viable ways to make extra cash. Investments or perhaps a small part-time business will interest you. Don't let minor health problems get out of hand.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Your mate may want to disagree with you today. Try to be accommodating and offer to take him or her somewhere nice. You can turn anxiety into passion with the right efforts.

Birthday Baby: There isn't anything you won't try at least once, but you learn from your mistakes and aren't likely to repeat them. You are fair, loyal and dedicated to helping others.

DAILY CROSSWORD

TMSPuzzles@aol.com



By Eugene R. Puffenberger
Reston, VA
11/17/00

ACROSS
1 Boorish
6 Couples
11 Mind-reading letters
14 Egypt's Anwar
15 Shoelace tip
16 Twosome
17 "Washington's Passage of the Delaware" painter
19 Used to be
20 Carryall bag
21 Depart
23 Be a candidate
27 Hummed
29 Coral islands
30 Rented
31 Lose one's way
32 Lawman Earp
33 That man
36 Shore bird
37 Forgo
38 Long live!
39 Hindu title
40 River of Rouen
41 Unspoken
42 Observing
44 Minuteman's weapon
45 Bank employees
47 Adroit maneuvering
48 Steer clear of
49 Additional
50 Half a Kenyan rebel?
51 "The Bath" painter
58 Ugandan Amin
59 Hippodrome
60 Bathsheba's husband
61 Brown with a band
62 Katmandu's land
63 Gershwin hero

DOWN
1 Chicago hrs.
2 Cheerleader's cheer
3 Fuss
4 Donaldson of ABC news
5 Majestic
6 Cheap jewelry
7 Chills and fever
8 Unwell
9 Sis, bro or cuz
10 Salon artist
11 "The Peaceable Kingdom" painter
12 Urbane
13 Struck a stance
18 Topers
22 Poetic before
23 Selects actors
24 Playful marine mammal
25 "Unfurled" painter
26 Outline
27 Work at the loom
28 Detest
30 Telling fibs
32 Farm carts
34 Climbing plants
35 Dull surface
37 Low dam
38 Urn
40 Burpee, for one
41 Refines one's skills
43 Actor Wallach
44 Actress Sorvino
45 Sri Lankan separatist
46 Sidestep
47 Word before point or length
49 Talking bird
52 "You __ My Sunshine"
53 Agt.
54 Letters indicating a sellout
55 Melodic tune
56 Children's running game
57 Biblical pronoun

SATURDAY PUZZLE ANSWER

P	A	W	S	■	H	E	L	P	S	■	A	L	D	A
O	L	E	O	■	E	X	A	L	T	■	N	O	O	N
P	A	I	N	■	R	U	M	O	R	■	T	R	U	K
S	I	G	N	S	■	L	A	Y	A	W	E	I	G	H
■	■	■	H	E	I	S	T	■	■	F	A	R	■	■
C	A	F	T	A	N	■	P	R	E	S	I	D	E	S
A	B	A	■	M	A	M	I	E	■	H	O	R	N	E
B	A	R	S	■	P	E	T	A	L	■	R	I	T	A
A	B	E	T	S	■	S	O	L	I	D	■	V	E	T
L	A	R	R	I	G	A	N	■	F	I	V	E	R	S
■	■	■	A	G	O	■	■	R	E	N	E	W	■	■
W	E	I	G	H	S	I	D	E	■	G	R	E	A	T
H	A	N	G	■	P	R	U	N	E	■	S	I	R	E
O	R	A	L	■	E	M	B	E	R	■	E	G	G	S
A	P	S	E	■	L	A	S	E	R	■	S	H	O	T

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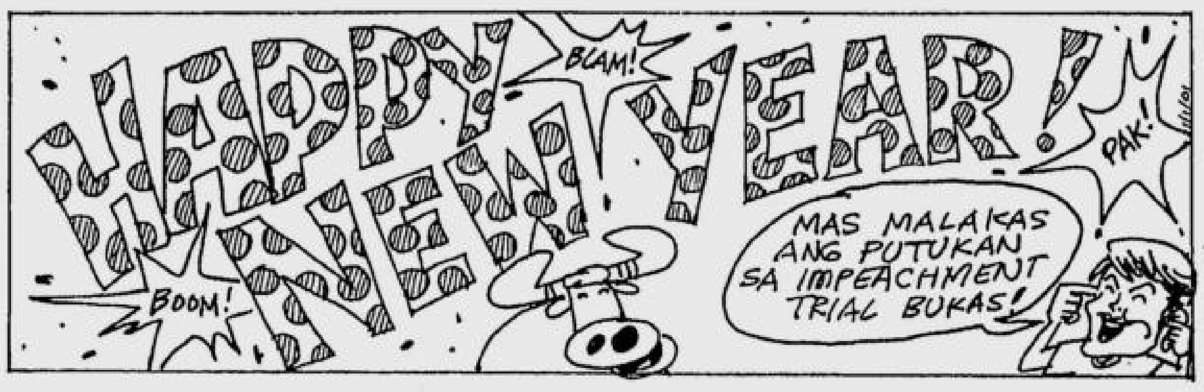
11/17/00

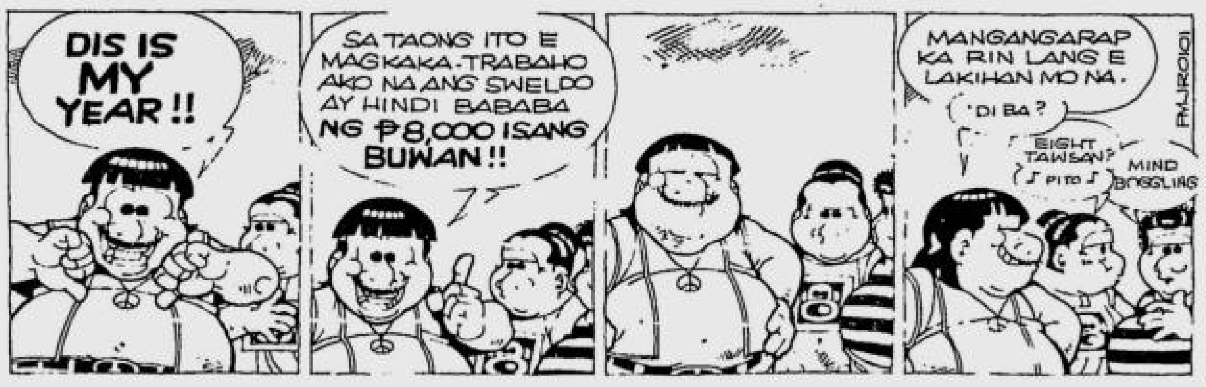
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


HAPPY NEW YEAR!
BLAM!
PAK!
BOOM!
MAS MALAKAS ANG PUTUKAN SA IMPEACHMENT TRIAL BUKAS!
1-1-01

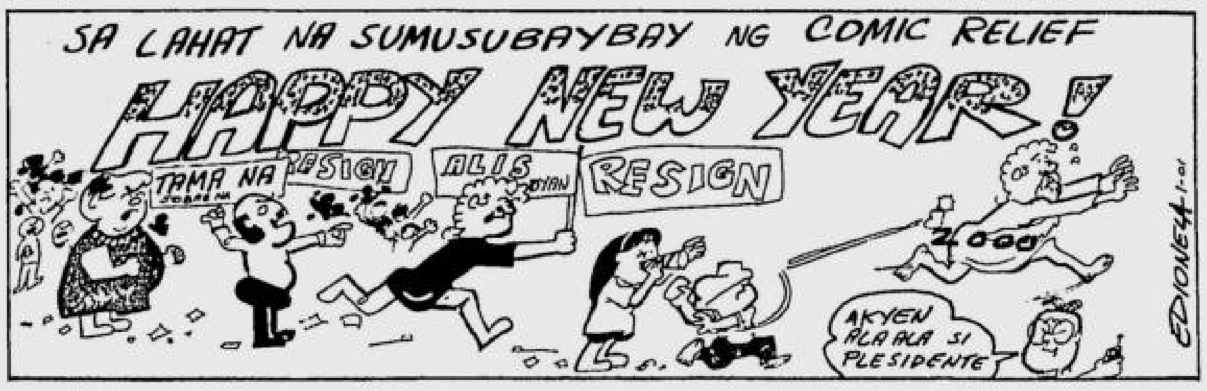
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


DIS IS MY YEAR!!
SA TAONG ITO E MAGKAKA-TRABAHO AKO NA ANG SWELDO AY HINDI BABABA NG ₱8,000 ISANG BUWAN!!
MANGANGARAP KA RIN LANG E LAKIHAN MO NA.
DI BA?
EIGHT TAWSAN?
PITO
MIND BOGGLING
PMJR0101

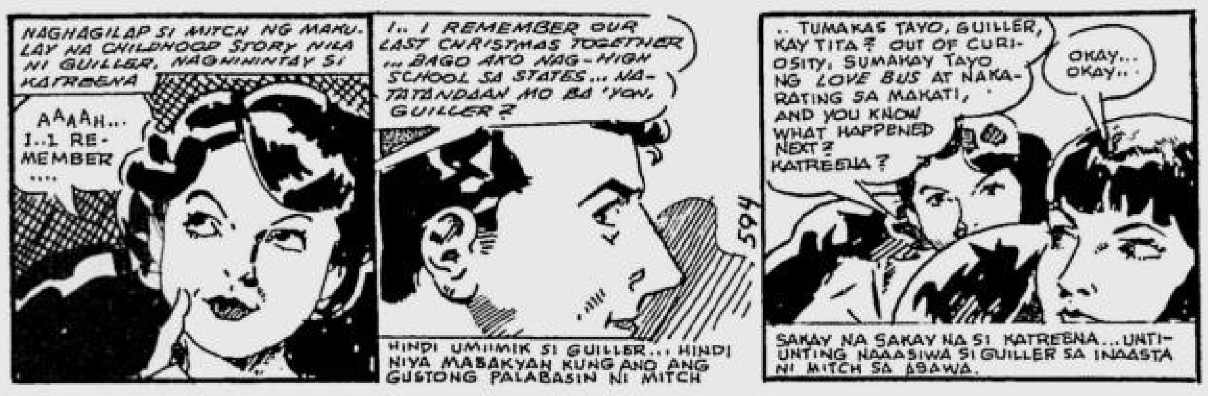
SIMO

BY EDGAR DIONELA


SA LAHAT NA SUMUSUBAYBAY NG COMIC RELIEF
HAPPY NEW YEAR!
TAMA NA
RESIGN
ALIS DYAN
RESIGN
2000
AKYEN ALA ALA SI PLESIDENTE
EDIONELA 1-01

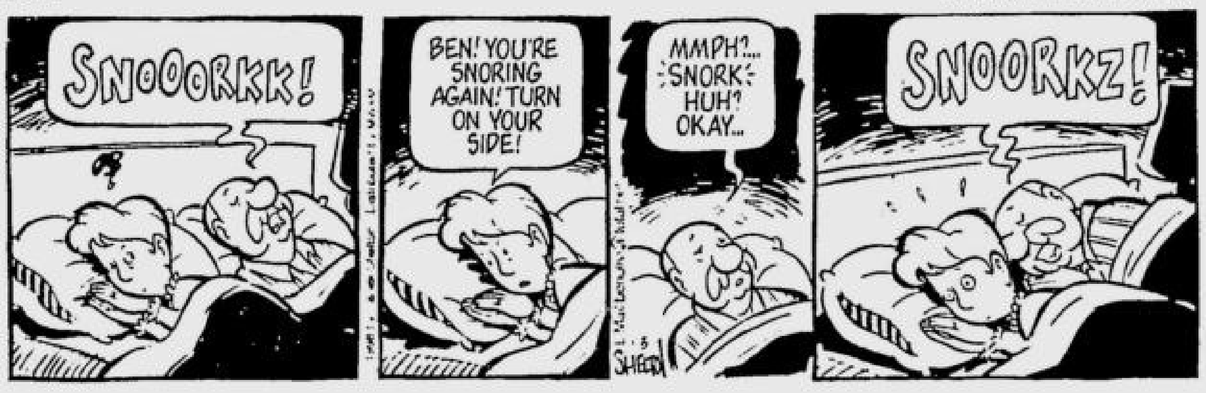
KATREENA

BY JOY CONIENDO


NAGHAGILAP SI MITCH NG MAKULAY NA CHILDHOOD STORY NILA NI GUILLER, NAGHIHINTAY SI KATREENA
AAAAH... I..I REMEMBER....
I.. I REMEMBER OUR LAST CHRISTMAS TOGETHER ...BAGO AKO NAG-HIGH SCHOOL SA STATES... NATATANDAAN MO BA 'YON, GUILLER?
HINDI UMIIMIK SI GUILLER... HINDI NIYA MABAKYAN KUNG ANO ANG GUSTONG PALABASIN NI MITCH
594
.. TUMAKAS TAYO, GUILLER, KAY TITA? OUT OF CURIOSITY, SUMAKAY TAYO NG LOVE BUS AT NAKARATING SA MAKATI, AND YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED NEXT? KATREENA?
OKAY... OKAY...
SAKAY NA SAKAY NA SI KATREENA...UNTI-UNTING NAAASIWA SI GUILLER SA INAASTA NI MITCH SA ASAWA.

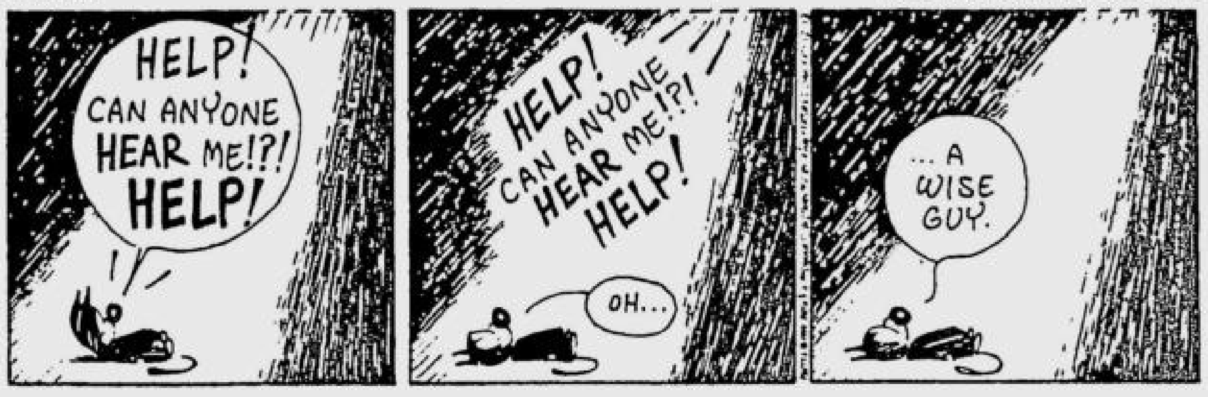
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


SNOOORKK!
BEN! YOU'RE SNORING AGAIN! TURN ON YOUR SIDE!
MMPH?... SNORK HUH? OKAY...
SNOORKZ!
SHELTON

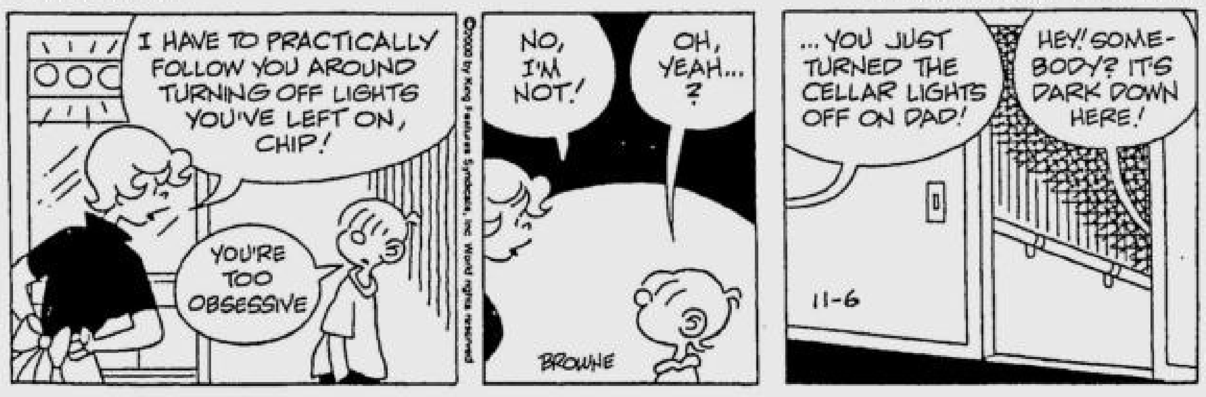
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


HELP! CAN ANYONE HEAR ME!?! HELP!
HELP! CAN ANYONE HEAR ME!?! HELP!
OH...
...A WISE GUY.

HI AND LOIS

BY BRIAN & GREG WALKER


I HAVE TO PRACTICALLY FOLLOW YOU AROUND TURNING OFF LIGHTS YOU'VE LEFT ON, CHIP!
YOU'RE TOO OBSESSIVE
NO, I'M NOT!
OH, YEAH...?
BROWNE
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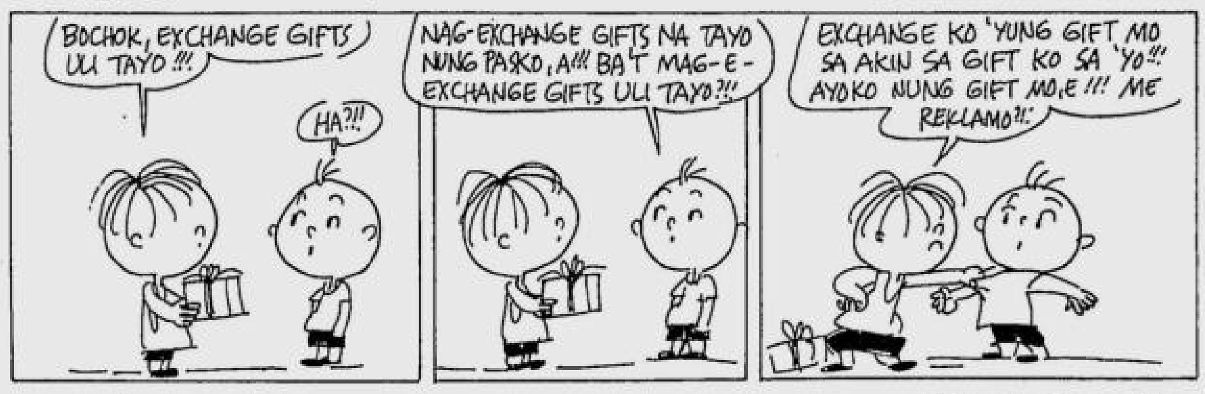
...YOU JUST TURNED THE CELLAR LIGHTS OFF ON DAD!
HEY! SOMEBODY? IT'S DARK DOWN HERE!
11-6

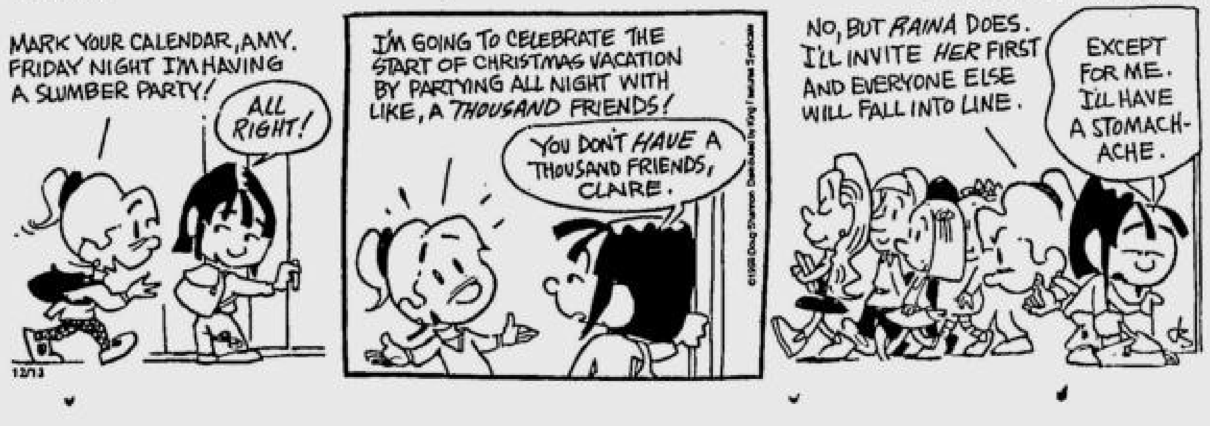
LOVEKNOTS

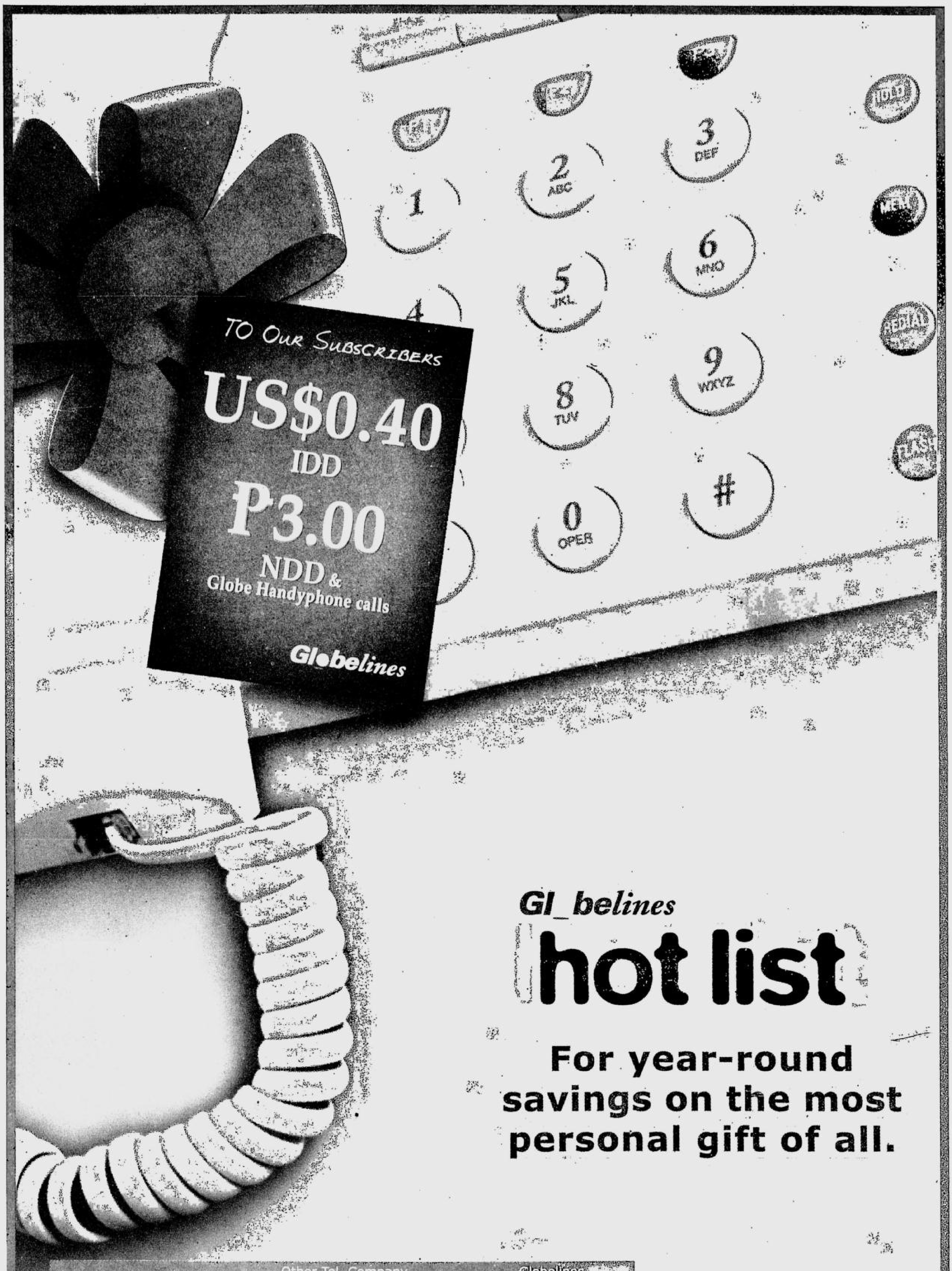
BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


BOCHOK, EXCHANGE GIFTS ULI TAYO!!!
HA?!!
NAG-EXCHANGE GIFTS NA TAYO NUNG PASKO, A!!! BA'T MAG-E-EXCHANGE GIFTS ULI TAYO?!!
EXCHANGE KO 'YUNG GIFT MO SA AKIN SA GIFT KO SA 'YO!!! AYOKO NUNG GIFT MO, E!!! ME REKLAMO?!

CLAIRE

BY DOUG SHANNON


MARK YOUR CALENDAR, AMY. FRIDAY NIGHT I'M HAVING A SLUMBER PARTY!
ALL RIGHT!
I'M GOING TO CELEBRATE THE START OF CHRISTMAS VACATION BY PARTYING ALL NIGHT WITH LIKE, A THOUSAND FRIENDS!
YOU DON'T HAVE A THOUSAND FRIENDS, CLAIRE.
NO, BUT RAINA DOES. I'LL INVITE HER FIRST AND EVERYONE ELSE WILL FALL INTO LINE.
EXCEPT FOR ME. I'LL HAVE A STOMACH-ACHE.
12/13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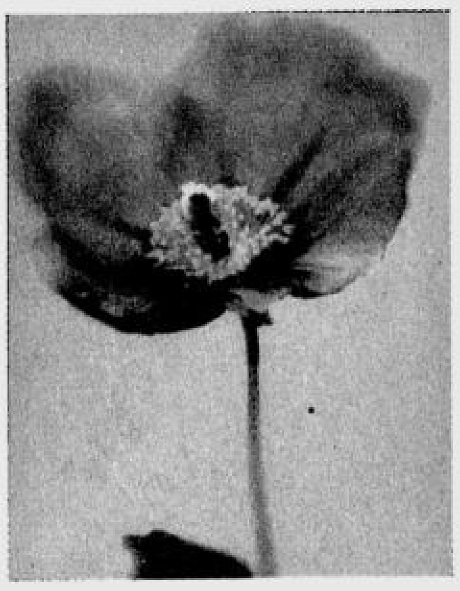


Flower power

ONCE again, Don Jaime Zobel de Ayala welcomes the new year with visions exquisite and exciting.

The 2001 calendar he has designed for Globe Telecom is a veritable garden of earthly delights—mesmerizing photographs of roses, tulips, sunflowers, calla lilies, orchids, birds of paradise, just take your pick. These are choice selections from Zobel's much-acclaimed iris prints exhibit, "Passages."

Award-winning graphics designer Francisco "Dopy" Doplon collaborated with Zobel for this elegant wall calendar, aptly titled "Celebration of Life."

Celebration, indeed: Globe, the country's industry leader in state-of-the-art telecommunications, posted a 62-percent increase in income this year, hitting P1.05 billion as of Sept. 30. This year, too, Globe was named Employer of the Year by the Personnel Management Association of the Philippines.

A company in full bloom, and Zobel says it best with floral flourish.

President Roxas remembered today

THE COUNTRY celebrates today the 103rd birth anniversary of President Manuel A. Roxas.

The President Roxas Foundation will offer a Mass at the Santuario de San Antonio in Makati City at 12 nn today. Expected to attend are friends and members of the family led by the late president's daughter Ruby R. Roxas, daughter-in-law Judy A. Roxas and grandson, former Trade Secretary Manuel "Mar" A. Roxas.

President Roxas was born to Gerardo Roxas and Rosario Acuña on Jan. 1, 1892 in Capiz (now Roxas City), Capiz. For 31 years beginning with his election as governor of his province at the age of 27, he served in various appointive and elective government positions, culminating in his election to the presidency of the first Asian country to gain independence from colonial rule.

Roxas dedicated his life to the pursuit of freedom for his country and the well-being of his countrymen. His sterling leadership qualities and his wealth of experience as a legislator, constitutionalist, economist, soldier and orator propelled him to the challenge of leading a nation suffering from the ravages of World War II.

Brief as his term was, the period from 1946 to 1948 were the crucial years when the groundwork for national recovery was laid. Perhaps Roxas' achievement could be summed up in this nutshell by Sen. Claro M. Recto: "Considering the number and magnitude of those problems... and the extreme brevity of the time fate was to allot to him, no other ruler without his talent and industry could have achieved as much as he. It is indeed his possession of such intellectual wealth, enhanced even more by a divine gift of eloquence not surpassed by any other of his generation, that will make the name of Manuel Roxas, in legend and in history, a patent of glory and a blazon of spiritual nobility not only for the Filipino people and the Malayan race, but for all humanity."

After serving as chief executive for a fruitful 23 months, President Roxas passed away on April 15, 1948 at the young age of 56. His life's work shaped and fortified the Filipino patriotic spirit. The sterling leadership that characterized his presidency truly exemplify the best of the Filipino soul.

The art of passage

(From page D1)

made their way to the core of the city, the main central plaza dominated by the cathedral on one side facing the seat of government across the plaza.

Act of arrival

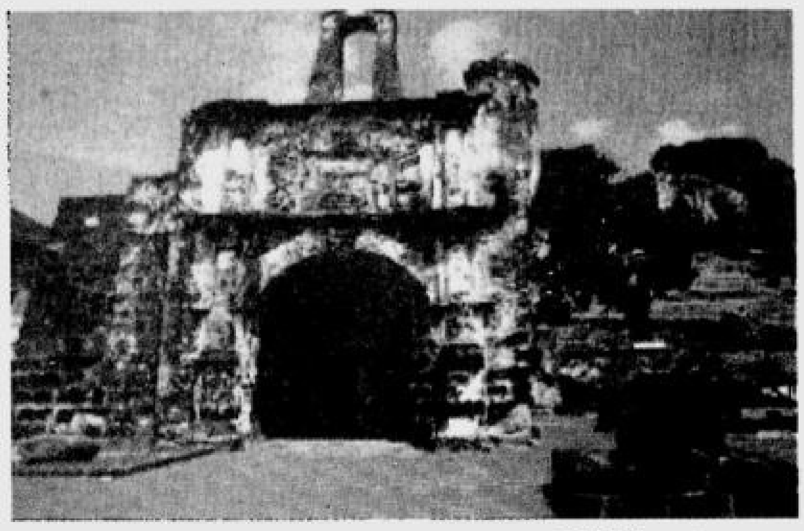
Entrances give importance to the act of arrival. During the American era, a series of monumental archways were constructed along the highway encircling Laguna province to mark the entrances to towns. A magnificent example survives today in Pagsanjan. Arches on provincial highways mark the highway entrance to provinces, cities and towns. The iconography of those arches that ranges from kitsch to self-serving images of personal and political glory is another story. Another series of more contemporary arches mark the entrances to Manila's Chinese quarter, as seen in the Friendship Gate at the foot of Jones Bridge.

Arches need not be monumental. They can be whimsical and personal. We festively decorate our streets to celebrate special occasions with a series of elaborate arches along the main thoroughfares of towns and cities that are taken down when the festivities are over. Whether constructed of stones and brick or ephemeral confections of bamboo and bunting, the arches not only tell us that we have made the transition from here to there, but that we've made the transition in style.

Today's entrances may have changed in appearance, but the psychology of arrival remains the same. A long journey to a city may no longer have to pass a drawbridge over a moat but instead leaves the highway to end at a downtown bus or touches down at an airport. More than bus terminals, airports have taken over as the new gateways to cities. In the past few years, Hong Kong spent millions to build state-of-the-art Chep Lak Kok airport and Kuala Lumpur completed its glittering KLIA. They, along with the lyrical sweep of Kansai Airport in Osaka, are high-tech gateways to Asian cities. Manila has made a valiant try with the Centennial Terminal which, after being in operation for only over a year, is already showing the telltale signs of unnecessary wear and tear that seems to plague most public buildings in the city, almost making us wonder why is it that it has become almost impossible to arrive in Manila or any other Philippine city in style?

No arches have been constructed to mark our crossing over into yet another year, a new Millennium in fact, but nevertheless, the symbolism of having gone from one tumultuous, historically charged year to another would have been made clear in our New Year celebrations last night. May we all have peace and national stability in this new year.

Email the author at afv@pacific.net.ph



ONLY the entrance portal remains to the ruined 16th century A Famosa Fort that was originally built high on a hill overlooking the sea from the center of Malacca in Malaysia.

Exalting our diversity and unity

The Dayaw festival treated Metro Manila folks to a survey of the rich universe of the Filipino soul

By Jeannie E. Javelosa

IF one were to slice the Filipino down the middle in the hope of understanding who s/he is, one would find a colorful diversity, an intermingling of various cultures. This diversity, this hybridity as some would call it, has puzzled foreigners. It has even puzzled Filipinos themselves.

The young today know more of Pokémon and Madonna than of the Mangyans and the Ivatans. This is disheartening. Our young (and majority of adults, too) are losing the awareness of their cultural heritage. They are therefore losing the essence of who and what they are all about.

It was with this in mind that the National Commission for Culture and the Arts held recently the ambitious but timely week-long festival titled "Dayaw." The title holds various meanings in different dialects and languages—to exult, to excel, to preserve that which is good, to praise. The underlying energy of the festival was celebration. Through rituals, dance movements, musical revelry, culinary delights and even beautiful indigenous architectural structures, the best of our native artists and performers were brought together for the general public to interact and mingle with.

At the Rizal Park, favored center of the strolling Filipino, city-bred folks moved into the world of 38 different ethno-linguistic groups. Interaction was the operative word. One had to talk, see, listen and open up oneself to living traditions. "Dayaw" attempted to present the uniqueness, the vibrancy, the opulence and sacredness of our indigenous cultures.

Strolling around, one could watch the Batangueños dance the Subli, finger the *kudyapi*, move to the beat of the gong, listen mesmerized to a ritual chant, watch the weaving of spectacular *samal* mats or *ikat* cloths, join an Ifugao ritual to dispel spirits from houses, learn the Cebunano's *arnis*, and many more.

Many among the folk artists who participated in the festival are the best in the country. There were lectures, demonstrations, daily performances, fora and discussions, parades, exhibits and culinary delights. The affair attempted to include so much that a visitor would have left with cultural overload. To many curious city folks, "Dayaw" seemed foreign, new. But they stayed on to learn.

Some scholars would argue that such living traditions must be seen in their real environment, as for example the T'boli ritual dance amid Lake Sebu. The NCCA had thought, however, that bringing them all together would also create linkages of sharing between the traditional groups themselves. And I believe that "if the mountain won't go to Mohammed..." then the next best thing is to bring them all to the heart of urban living.

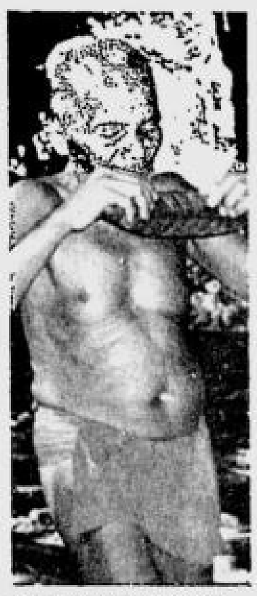
Unlike the Kasaysayan ng Lahi of the Marcos period and the Smithsonian Festival in Washington during the 1998 Centennial activities, the "Dayaw" festival leant toward the interactive and experiential.

To understand the subthemes is to understand what is essential in the Filipino. Somewhere within each urban Pinoy is the echo of a traditional worldview—that all things and beings are interconnected, are part of a great Oneness and imbued by the spirit of life; that this interconnection to nature, to this Oneness, is expressed through community and family.

Three subthemes dominated the festival: *kalikasan*, or nature and the environment as the source and sustainer of life, its sacredness, and its influence in art and culture; *kabanwaan* or the human community that empowers the individual to express and to be; and *kaitausan* that encompasses the invisible spirit world.

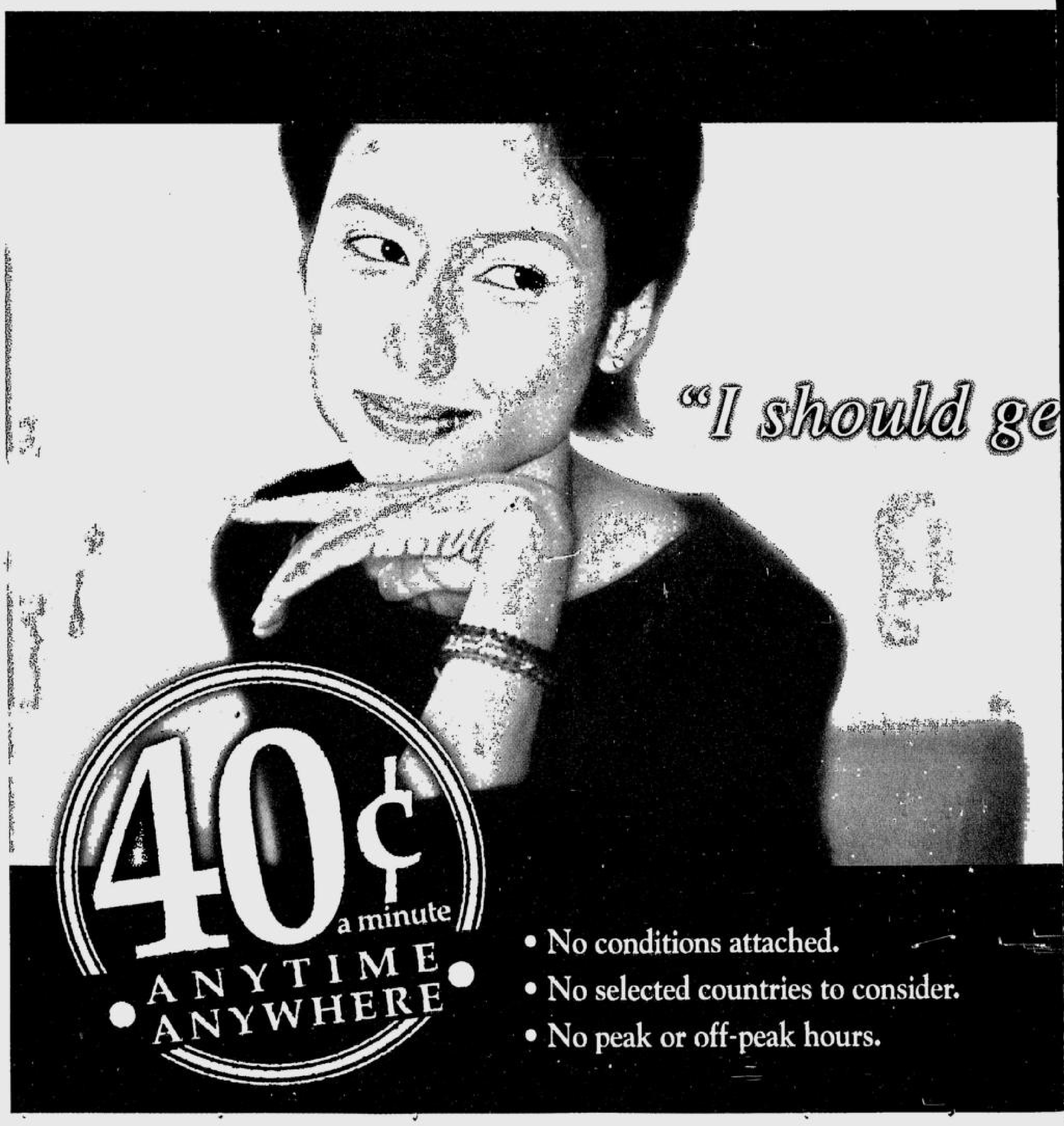
So in celebration, in sharing, in interaction, the Dayaw Festival became another link toward strengthening a healthy national image. Such coming together was timely.

Amidst the crisis of the nation, "Dayaw" reminded us that what is essential must be preserved, reclaimed and expressed. It made us see that our cultural heritage will survive because of traditions that continue to be lived. It showed that our creative achievements, our talents and unique gifts as a race are the healing balm to our very fragmented self-image.



THE AETA (shown here using a leaf as a musical instrument) is represented in the panorama of Philippine culture Dayaw: Philippine Cultural Communities Arts Festival.

E-mail the author at jej1@easycall.com.ph



- No conditions attached.
- No selected countries to consider.
- No peak or off-peak hours.

Sansó at Finale; Diaz at Galleria Duemila

ARTIST Juvenal Sansó celebrates the joy of art in "Ligaya," another toast to the beauty of nature, specifically flowers. Flowers have always been a favorite subject matter of Sansó. His flowers are the blossoms of his fertile imagination. The exhibit will be on view on Jan. 8-21 at the Art Center, 4/L SM Megamall A. Call 634-2410/11.

DIAZ AT GALLERIA DUEMILA. Duddley Diaz will exhibit several of his woodcut and watercolor studies for the much lauded "Via Crusis" at the Galleria Duemila, 4/L SM Megamall A. Call 831-9990 or 833-9815 or e-mail duemila@info. com. ph.

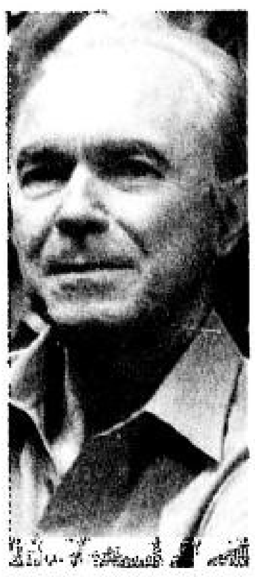
VISUAL ARTS

ESCORA AT FINALE. Fernando Escora mounts his fourth one- man exhibit dubbed "Gestures," at the Finale Art Gallery. The artist's intimate paintings focus on the quiet drama between two figures. The exhibit runs Jan. 16-28. Call 634-2410/11.

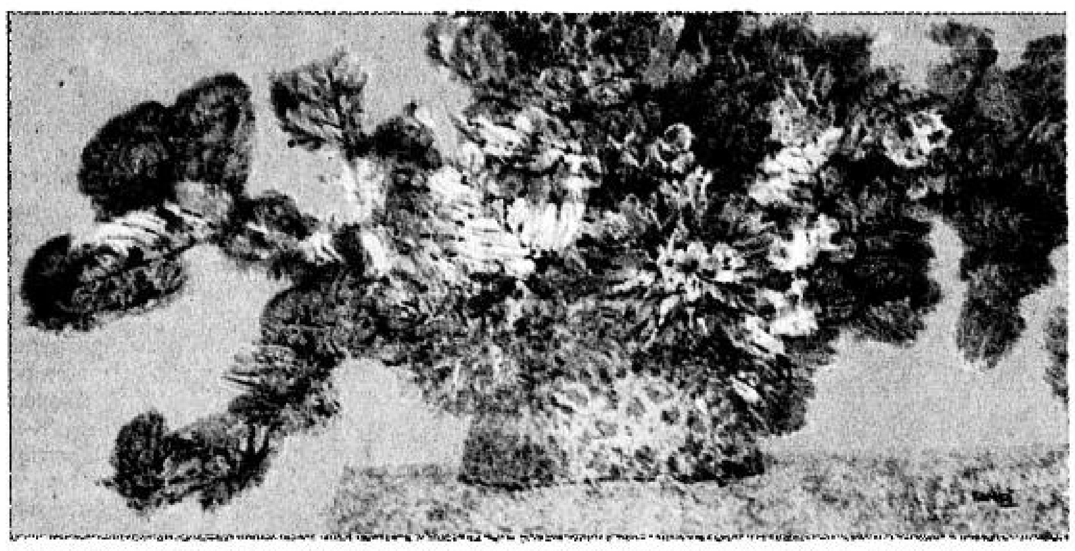
"TRUE CONFESSIONS" AT THE ART CENTER. Finale Art Gallery presents an exhibit of paintings, sculptures, photographs, video, installations and mixed media works by 33 young artists dubbed "True Confessions: Thoughts, Words, Acts." Participating artists are Ronald Achacoso, Juan Alcazaren, Ronald Anading, Mafe Baluyos, Ringo Bunoan, Mariano Ching, Lena Cobangbang, Louie Cordero. Alfred Cruz, Lyra Abueg Garcellano, Nona Garcia, Katya Guerrero, Geraldine Javier, Michelle Madrasto, Riza Manalo, Jet Melencio, Kei Miranda, Rhonda Miranda, Mike Munoz, Elaine Roberto Navas, Jonathan Olazo. Karlo Olavides, Jayson Oliveria, Bernardo Pacquing, Gary-Ross Pastrana, Juni Salvador, Brian Sergio. Yasmin Sison, Gerardo Tan, Wire Tuazon, Trek Valdizno, Alvin Villaruel and Alvin Zafra. The exhibit is on view at the Art Center, 4/L SM Megamall A until Jan. 5. Call 634-2410/2411.

TWO ARTISTS AT FINALE. Finale presents the latest works of two Filipino masters of Chinese descent in separate shows in the gallery's two venues, the Finale Art Gallery at SM Megamall and Finale Art File, LaO Centre, Makati. The two artists are Ang Kiukok (Finale LaO) and Ting Ping Lay (Finale Megamall). Both exhibits run until Jan. 3. Call 634-2410/2411 (Finale Megamall) and 815-1813 or 810-4071 (Finale LaO).

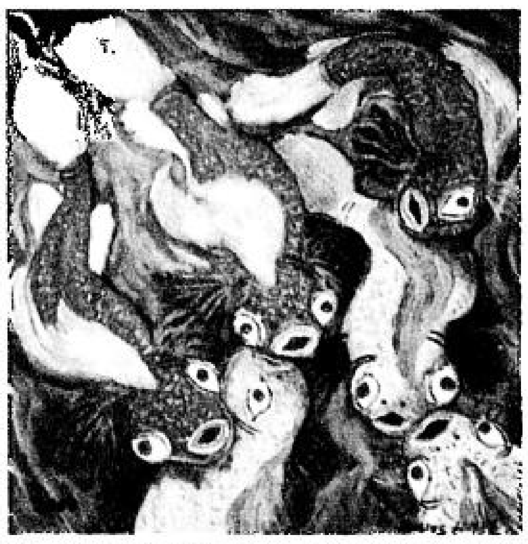
"IMAGES" AT GALLERY 27. Joachim Bondoc mounts his third one-man show dubbed "Images," an exhibit of subjects in their natural state. It is a representation of art, people, things and everyday life in black and white and in full color. The exhibit runs until Jan. 5 at Gallery 27 Roces, PB Dionisio Building, Roces Avenue, QC. Call 413-4463.



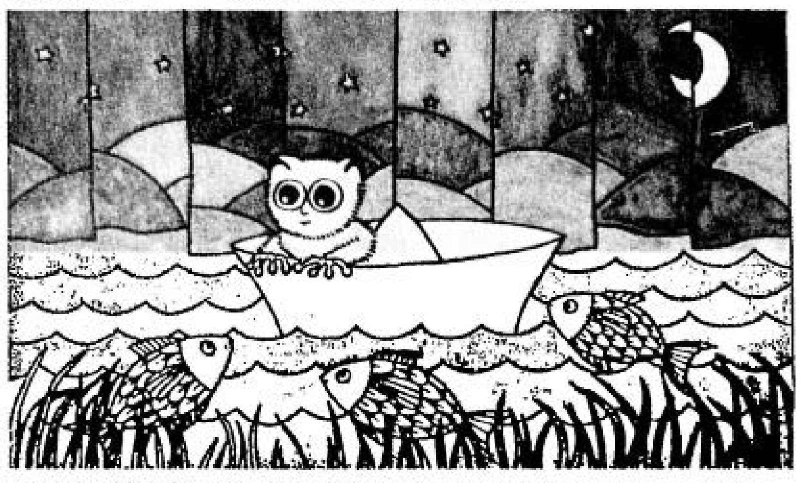
JUVENAL Sansó



"TINGES Awake 2000" by Sansó, on view from Jan. 8-21 at the Art Center, 4/L SM Megamall A



ARTIST Julius Limpe recently concluded his seventh solo exhibit, dubbed "Whatever Comes to My Mind," at the Gallery 828, Shangri-La Plaza Mall, Mandaluyong City.



"BANGKANG Papel sa Bohol" by Michelle Marie Solis, on view at the UP Vargas Museum, Jan. 8-31

"DOGSHOW" AT SURROUNDED BY WATER. The artist-run Surrounded by Water holds an annual yearender show dubbed "Dogshow." Multimedia works are on view at the Main Gallery, Kitchen and Stockroom. Participating artists include Johnny Alcazaren, Alfredo Juan, Isabel Aquilizan, Ringo Bunoan, Roberto Chabet, Jonathan Ching, Mariano Ching, Lena Cobangbang, Mideo Curz, Danny Dalena, Christina Dy, Eduardo Enriquez, Alfredo Esquillo Jr., Nona Garcia, Katya Guerrero, Geraldine Javier, Kitchy Kitchy Koo, Alice and Lucinda, Komaki Oka, Jojo Legaspi, Katrina Miranda, Mike Munoz, Jayson Oliveria, Gary-Ross Pastrana, Roxlee, Yasmin Sison, Wire Tuazon, Ugat-Lahi and Victor Immature. The exhibit runs until Jan. 6. Call 724-2027.

LIMPIN AT LIKHA-DIWA. Vivian Limpin is holding her first solo exhibit until Jan. 9 at Likha-Diwa, 1 Lt. J. Francisco St., Krus na Ligas, QC. Call 433-4641.

LIM AT VARGAS MUSEUM. Tita Lim opens her seventh solo exhibit of recent photographs dubbed "Beyond Aperture," on Jan. 8 at the Lobby of the UP Vargas Museum. The exhibit runs until Jan. 31. Call 920-5310 local 7407/7408.

GROUP EXHIBIT AT VARGAS MUSEUM. "Bangkang Papel," a group exhibit featuring 17 artists Cebu and Bohol will open on Jan. 8 at Gallery A and B of the UP Vargas Museum. Participating artists include Evan Bejec, Ma. Victoria Beltran, Ellen May Carmona, Stephanie de la Cruz, Estela Ocampo-Fernandez, Raymund Fernandez, Sandra de la Serna Lim, Roy Lu, Nelia Lungay, Dennis "Sio" Montera, Hana Marie Nella, Karl Roque, Lucilo Sagayno, Jeffrey Sisican, Michelle Marie Solis, JV Villacin and John Francis Zaldariaga. The exhibit runs until Jan, 31. Call 920-5301 local 7407/7408.

ROCK Drilon

Instructions from the Rock

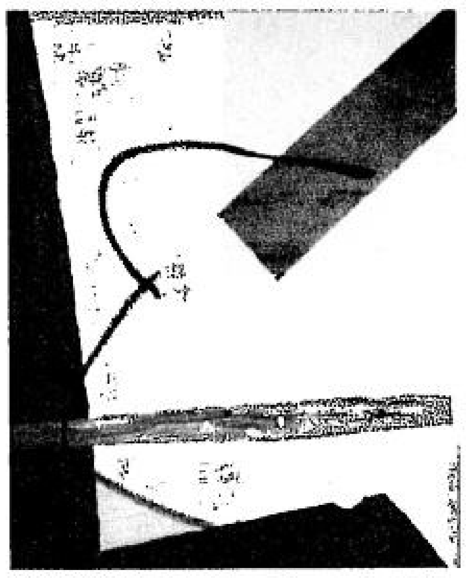
"IN DISAGREEMENTS with loved ones, deal only with the current situation. Don't bring up the past." This is the 13th entry in the Dalai Lama's "Instructions for Life," and it is the same seed of wisdom that guided artist Rock Drilon's brushstrokes in his latest works to be unveiled on Jan. 5 at the Glorietta Artspace, 3/L Glorietta 4, Makati City. The exhibit is titled "Instructions for Life II."

Taking off from the series of abstracts he'd exhibited in June at the Galleria Duemila, which culled inspiration from the same 19 tenets from the Dalai Lama, Drilon this time presents a total of 19 works in acrylic on medium and large canvases.

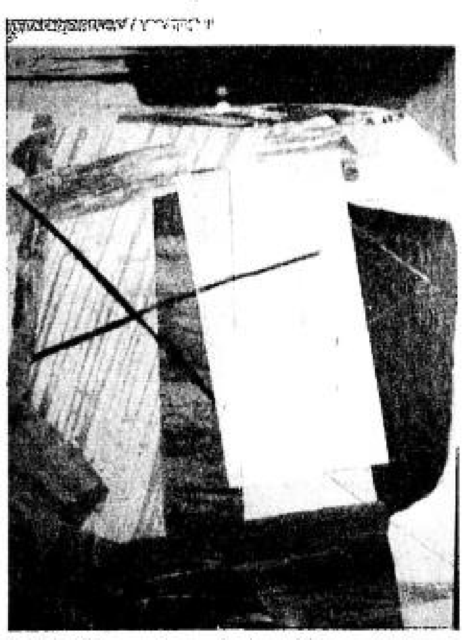
"I was deeply touched by the literature, its simplicity, its timeliness," says Drilon, who got hold of the "Instructions," which includes gems such as "When you lose, don't lose the lesson" and "Remember that silence is sometimes the best answer"—through the Internet and has since been forwarding the text to his friends.

How he translates the literature to his work is what's to watch out for. But there is a strong presence of red in this latest group, and there are suggestions of yellows in contrast to darker tones, a slight dark-versus-white battle. Drilon says that the text has continued to make its presence felt up to now so that the new works are less interpretation, more a manifestation of how the instructions have been absorbed by his life and so inevitably by his art.

A veteran of more than 30 solo exhibitions since 1975 when he debuted with his "Jeepney" series at the Metro Gallery, Drilon—also a poet and occasional performance artist, full-time husband and father to four boys—is one of the more established abstract painters around. Drilon has also exhibited his works in Switzerland, France and the US, and won an AAP award in the '70s.



"A LOVING atmosphere in your home is the foundation in your life."



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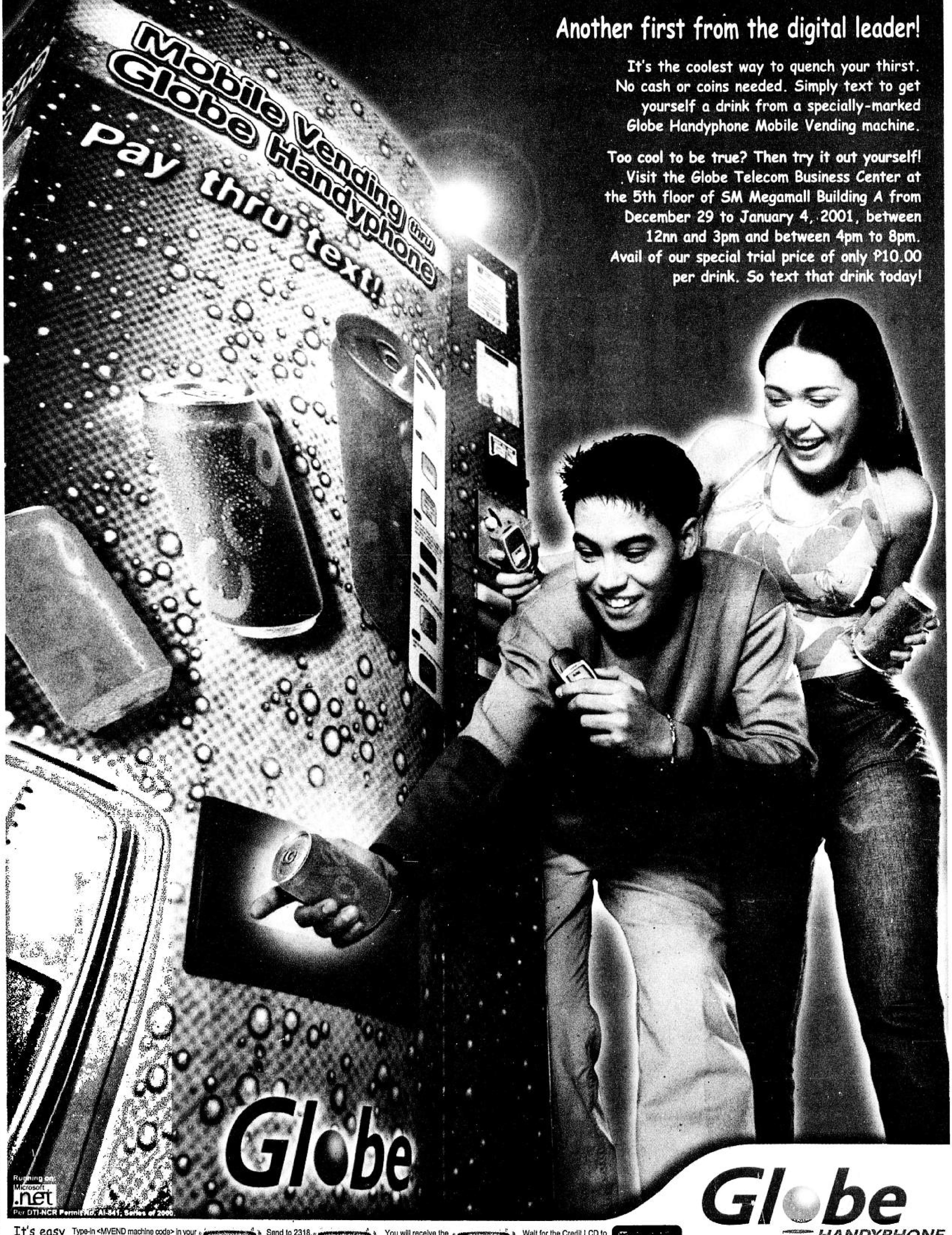
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Any act of charity serves as inspiration for others to do the same

ONE of the reasons your kids in grade school are healthy and are following a good nutrition diet is because their teachers care enough to teach them how to be so.

The Department of Education, Culture and Sports conducted a nationwide search for outstanding regional implementors of the Integrated School Health and Nutrition Program in September 1999 to September 2000.

The winners were announced last October and the awarding ceremonies were held at the Teachers' Camp in Baguio. I am writing about it only now because I just got all the details and I wanted this story to be my New Year column.

PURELY PERSONAL

Josephine Darang

North Central Elementary School in Polangui, Albay was declared national winner. Lourdes Guadania Sabater, the district nutrition coordinator, went with her husband Jessie Sabater to Baguio to receive the award for the school and the region.

Helping reinforce an effective nutrition program for the children are Fabian Sabaybay, Jesus Ollet, principal II; Yolanda Bejado Samson, NDEP coordinator; Norma Verga Hilutin, nutrition coordinator; Domingo Salire and other nutrition teachers.

LOURDES Sabater (first row, fourth from left) with fellow teachers Fabian Sabaybay, Jesus Ollet, Yolanda Samson, Norma Hilutin, Domingo Salire and the teaching force of North Central Elementary School in Polangui, Albay

Ms Sabater and her fellow teachers exemplify a force of good teachers whom we need to teach our children. It makes me feel good to know there are other teachers like them who go out an extra mile for any child especially in his need to be healthy,, so he can study better.

Congratulations also to Dr. Epifanio Buela who won in the first search for superintendents with best initiatives for women's health promotion.

The monks in Malaybalay

THE GOOD things happening in the provinces, judging from the letters I receive, reinforces my belief that we will have a good New Year 2001. Instead of dwelling on the negative that the impeachment trial is causing, the monks in the Monastery of Transfiguration in Malaybalay, Bukidnon go on with their schedule of prayers, tending the fields and making Monk's Blend of coffee.

The simplest of food cooked by Dom Martin de Jesus Gomez, OSB, who is now kitchen master, is regarded by the monks as "heavenly meals."

We do not stop loving because we only have so little, according to the newsletter sent to me. The monks say: "Like a child, let us love indiscriminately so that people may meet God in us. We in the monastery look forward to a happy and blessed Christmas and we wish you the same joy and hope."

"Remember us if you have something to share," they write. "We in turn will share it with those who go to us." Please write Dom Martin de Jesus Gomez, OSB, Monastery of the Transfiguration, Malaybalay, Bukidnon.

Hallmark for life

WHEN you buy Hallmark cards, you help the Leukemic Indigents Fund Endowment (Life), a charitable organization dedicated to saving the lives of poor leukemic children by way of sustained medical treatment. That is good news for the New Year because there are people who care.

This also goes for all charitable organizations like the Unicef who systematically help poor children not only in giving them medicines, but sending them to school. This work is uplifting and should inspire others to do the same even in their small way.

One rich friend of mine told me when I asked her help that she was not a philanthropist. The little she could have given to this poor church being rebuilt was like "a drop of water that the ocean would now miss" because she failed to give.

The golden jubilee Columban priests

I WAS blessed to attend the Mass celebrating the Golden Jubilee of two good priests at the Malate Church on Dec. 21. Both former parish priests of the church, Fr. John V. Gallagher and Fr. James McCarthy, came to the Philippines 40 years ago. They spent most of their time in Malate Church.

In his homily, Father Gallagher said he was not so much concerned as how many years he has been a priest, but that he was a good disciple of Christ.

Dulce Festin Baybay, the first woman Malate parish council president, told me: "They are my heroes, Josie. They are great men."

And Fr. Michael Martin, present parish priest, said, "Let us thank them for bringing us to a journey of deeper faith and deeper humanity."

Macau tour in January

A CONSORTIUM of travel agents is organizing a tour of Macau and its churches in January. There are at least 15 churches in Macau such as St. Dominic Church, which is the shrine of Our Lady of Fatima; St. Augustine Parish, where Filipino overseas workers attend Mass on Sundays; St. Anthony de Padua Church, St. Joseph Church, Our Lady of Penha Church, Se Cathedral, to name a few.

Please call Macau Government Tourism Office at their new tel. nos.: 830-2013/2995 or fax 892-5232. They have moved to 7-C Valero Tower, 122 Valero St., Salcedo Village, Makati City.

The way to happiness

TEN years ago, I copied the seven ways to attain happiness. I wrote them down in a small recycled notebook, which I look at many times to remind me what to do. In the notebook are quotes from great people that inspire me to do good.

In sharing the seven steps with you, it would be like suggesting to you what you can do as a New Year's resolution.

They are:

- Keep your heart free from hate.
- Free your mind from worry.
- Live simply, expect little, give much.
- Fill your life with love.
- Scatter sunshine (do things for others especially the poor and you can see the smile on their faces).
- Forget self.
- Think of others.

A blessed New Year to all! This is our 14th year together. If there are news of harder times ahead, just remember God always provides from day to day. Cling to Jesus, as Msgr. Jerome Reyes says. Do not let go.

Q&A
#3
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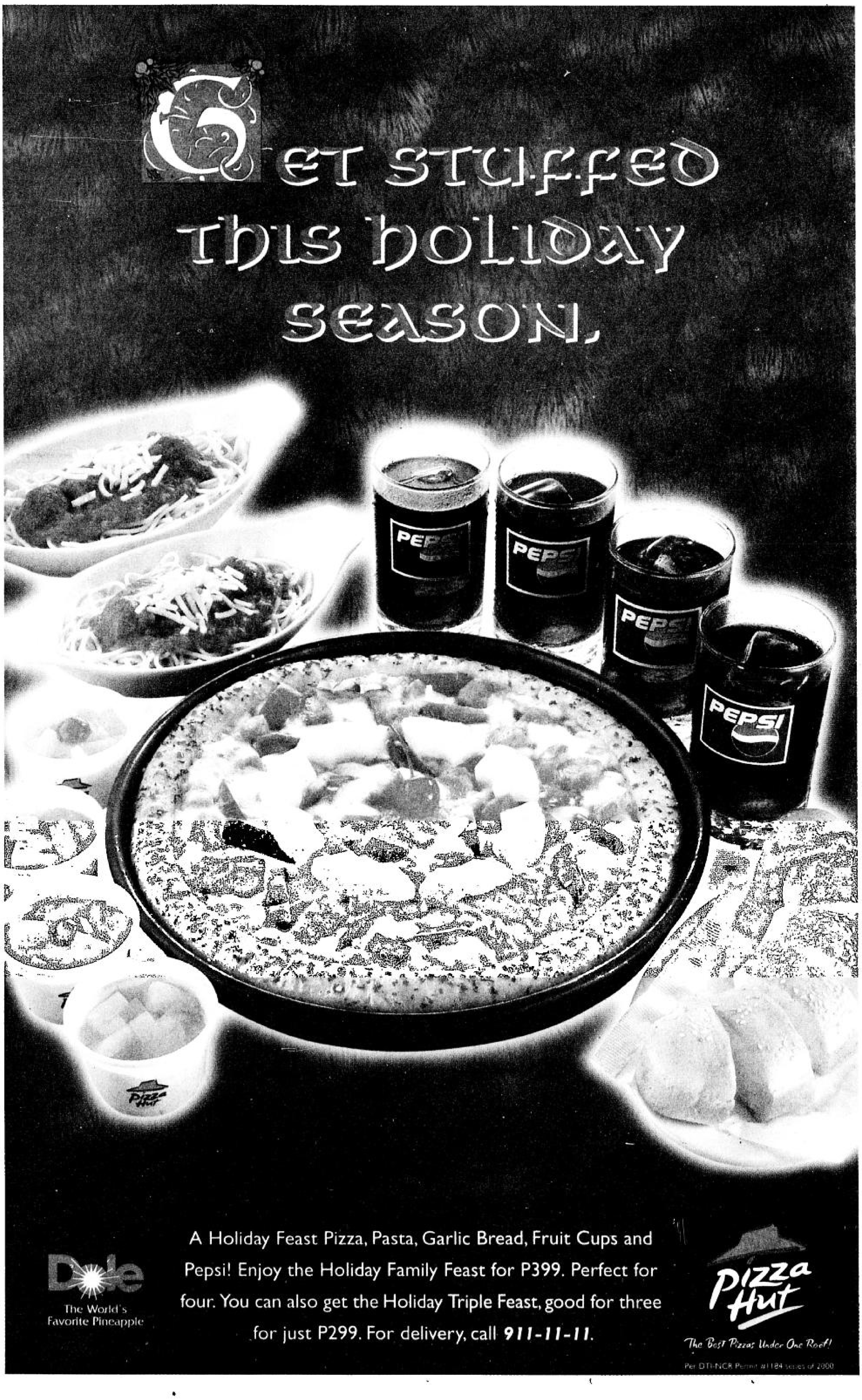
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Per DTI-NCR Permit #1184 series of 2000

Sto. Niño festival promises a feast of icons and fervor

BEN Farrales

MULATTO Sto. Niño

GOLD-DRAPED Sto. Niño

JANUARY heralds not only a new year but also one of the most impressive fiesta celebrations in the pages of Philippine history. This is the month dedicated to the Infant Jesus, a most venerated religious image in the country, whose earliest recorded history is the gift of an icon of the child Jesus by Ferdinand Magellan, who discovered the Philippines in 1521, to new Filipino converts to Christianity, Queen Juana and King Humabon of Cebu.

The Congregacion del Santisimo Nombre del Niño Jesus headed by founding chair Ben Farrales has traditionally held an exhibit and a procession for the last 21 years on this month. Registration is still going on at the Congregacion Secretariat at the Pope Pius XII Center through Daisy Reyes at 525-9126/32 and Ben Farrales at 525-3421 and 524-8439. Call the Secretariat for further details.

Participants are not allowed to exhibit valuable items. The venue for Fiesta del Sto. Niño 2001 is the Philippine National Bank Financial Center, Pasay City from Jan. 16-28.

Registration days are Jan.15-17 at the Skylight area. The exhibit will open on Jan. 18 with a Mass, a novena and the blessing of the images. The exhibit is open to the public from Jan. 19-27. The grand procession is on Jan. 28.

Over 20 prominent names have already signed up as *hermanos mayores,* among them Oscar and Olympia Violago, who have donated a 1,800 sq m land on E. Rodriguez Avenue, QC where the Sto. Niño de Violago chapel was built two years ago.

The chapel holds Masses every Monday. Wednesday and Sunday. A novena to the Sto. Niño follows the Mass every Monday. Proceeds from the various activities of the members sustain the chapel, which also engages in outreach and other charitable activities. The classically designed altar is designed and executed by Antonio Adriano, current chair of the Congregacion.

ECUMENICAL Sto. Niño is a living gesture to Muslims.

VICKY Garcia's swaddled Sto. Niño

INFANT Jesus on a grape-laden stand

WEATHERED by time, this icon is ensconced in fine *callado*.

TOP fashion designer Nolie Hans' nestled Sto. Niño

EXQUISITE crowned Sto. Niño

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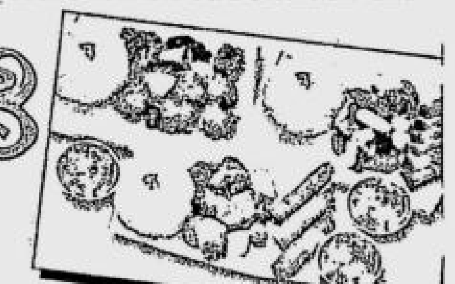
TAPSI Plus: 1 Tapsilog, 1 Longsilog, 1 pc. Bangus
PINOY TOPPING: 1 Tocino w/ Egg, 1 Adobo w/ Egg, 1 Arroz Ala Cubana w/ Egg (Dish Only)
GOTO KING: Any choices of Pinoy Deli Meals, 2 Leche Flan
WEI-CHUAN FOODS: Fried Chicken, Beef Steak, 2 Plain Rice
LYDIA'S LECHON: Lechon Toppings w/ Vegetables Paella w/ BBQ
SIZZLING PLATE: 4 pcs. Porkloin, 2 Mixed Vegetables
SHOKUJI: Shokuji Noodles Chqm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Applause and turbulence in Philippine stage 2000

'Miss Saigon' was impressive, the Moscow City Ballet made a stirring comeback, Repertory was unstoppable, Dramatis Personae was engaging

By Amadís Ma. Guerrero

WHAT a year—in the performing art—2000 (the first year of the millennium, although some say it is actually the final year of the 20th century) has been.

The show of the year, hands down—at least as far as controversy and media hype are concerned—is the Philippine production of the pop opera "Miss Saigon" by the Frenchmen Alain Boublil and Claude-Michel Schönberg, ongoing at the Cultural Center of the Philippines until March.

The critical consensus is that the production is really impressive, just as good as the New York and London productions, in some aspects even better. The performances, especially that of Leo Valdez as the Engineer, elicited raves.

However, there were many developments related to the mammoth production that were unwelcome, to put it mildly. For instance, booted out of the CCP for several months were the resident companies such as Tanghalang Pilipino, Ballet Philippines, Philippine Ballet Theater and the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra.

In an applauded statement read at a press conference at the CCP lobby on Oct. 26, Tanghalang Pilipino artistic director Nonon Padilla declared:

"Today, in this very hall, we are witness, and victim, to a situation where the master opens up his house to visitors who take over the master bedroom and all living areas, while the residents are relegated to the servant's quarters, if not the outhouse or the backyard—a throwback to colonial times when the colonial masters arrived and virtually took over our homes."

On Oct. 1, in a Playtime interview in PDI Lifestyle, Zeneida Amador of Repertory Philippines, Celeste Legaspi of Musical Theater Philippines and Audie Gemora of Trumpets, expounded on the implications of the high-budget (P450 million) show. Sponsors for other productions "have dried up," and the producers of "Miss Saigon," flushed with success and money, plan to stage the megahits "Phantom of the Opera" and "The Lion King."

In reply, producer Dong Alegre said his "immediate wish" was not to present these megahits but "to prop up a theater that may be able to show productions for long periods."

To counter "Miss Saigon," Tanghalang Pilipino restaged "Ilustrado," the sung-through musical by Ryan Cayabyab and Paul Dumol. "'Ilustrado' is original," said public relations coordinator Jocar Camins, "not a remake or adaptation of 'Madama Butterfly'."

Padilla hammered on the nationalist theme: "This musical is not, to use an overwrought expression, world-class. It is local. Everything in it is, in fact, local. No imports."

The K-J nonevent of the year was the cancelled concert of foremost soprano Kiri Te Kanawa. Whetting one's appetite was the voice of Te Kanawa over dzFE, the classical music station (which the singer pronounced "d-zET-FE") inviting listeners to her forthcoming concert in Metro Manila.

Alas, the concert was cancelled, ostensibly due to the unstable political situation in the country. Many believed the real reason was due to sluggish ticket sales because of the expensive price tag.

Comeback

For others, the real event of the year was the return of the Moscow City Ballet, which gave encore performances of the wonderful warhorses "Swan Lake" and "Giselle." Russian ballerina Natalia Chalokova was outstanding as Giselle, vulnerable yet strong.

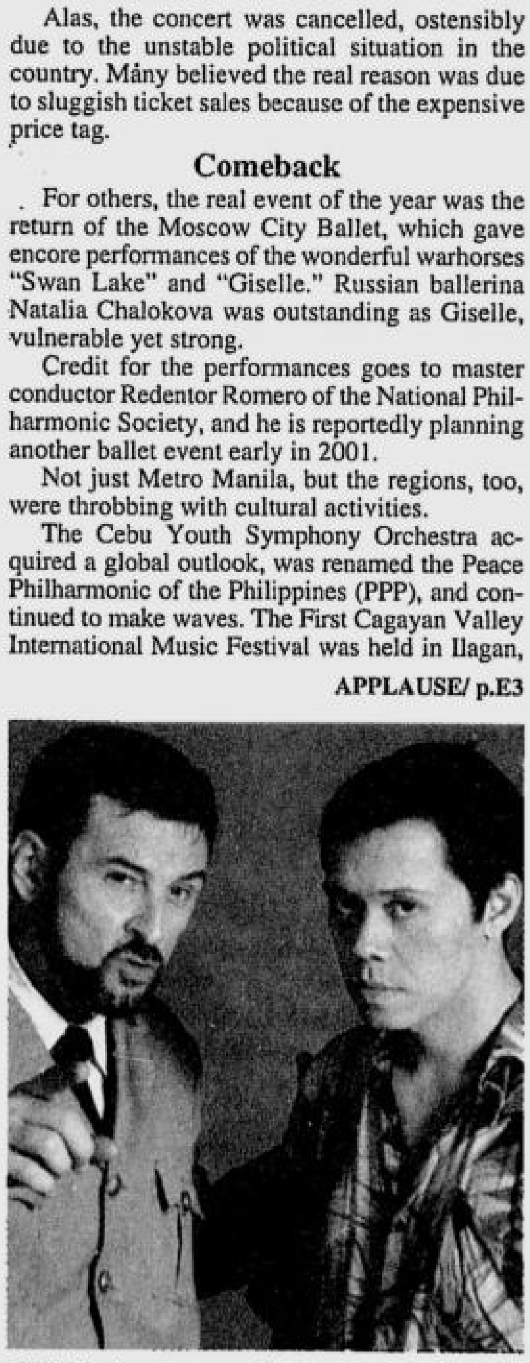
Credit for the performances goes to master conductor Redentor Romero of the National Philharmonic Society, and he is reportedly planning another ballet event early in 2001.

Not just Metro Manila, but the regions, too, were throbbing with cultural activities.

The Cebu Youth Symphony Orchestra acquired a global outlook, was renamed the Peace Philharmonic of the Philippines (PPP), and continued to make waves. The First Cagayan Valley International Music Festival was held in Ilagan,

APPLAUSE/ p.E3

"**ILUSTRADO:** Ang Buhay ni Rizal"



MIGUEL Faustman and Michael Williams in "Kiss of the Spider Woman"

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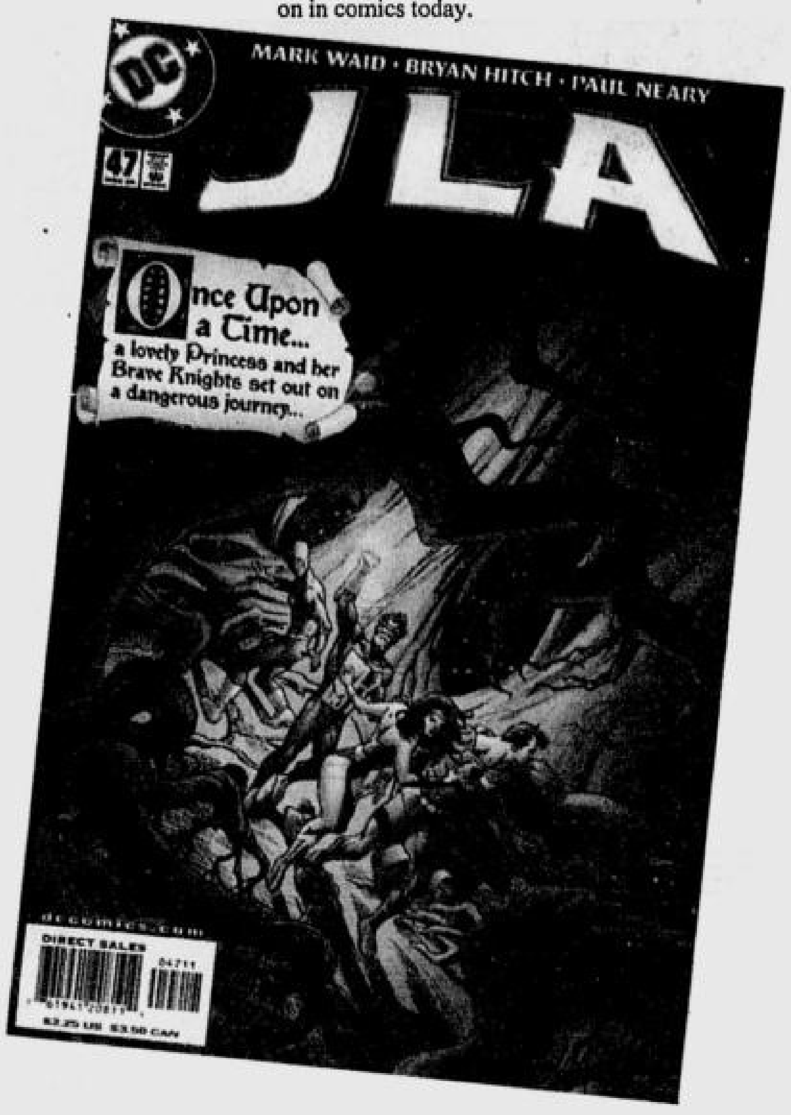
More than just superfriends

From the classic Justice League to a group marked with an X, super teams remain a staple for comic fans everywhere

BY RUEL S. DE VERA

REVIEW

SO maybe space monkey really wasn't part of the "Justice League of America," but that doesn't mean that the "JLA" is without its followers. Super-team comic books remain a staple for comic fans everywhere, and while there are other excellent other team titles, most notably DC Comics' "JSA" and Marvel Comics' "Thunderbolts," there are also mediocre ones. Yet among comics' most popular books, there are four significant titles that exemplify what's going on in comics today.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Back to the aforementioned space simian: the cheesy TV "Superfriends" (pronounced SYOO-perfriends) was never really a part of DC continuity, the "JLA" is perhaps the most historically significant team book ever. While it has suffered from some bad revamps through the years, the current "JLA" series is a return to its original idea: the most popular heroes of the DC Universe together. Thus, Superman, Wonder Woman, the Flash, Green Lantern, Aquaman, the Martian Manhunter and, for comic relief, Plastic Man. If there's a noticeable absence, then understand that one of the recent storyarcs had the "JLA" voting to expel The Batman from their ranks. That is only one of the many plots engineered by writer Mark Waid as he, together with penciler Bryan Hitch, continues to produce quality issues. Waid's sharp plots and Hitch's expressive art are only the latest combination of talent that has led to the resurgence of "JLA."

Owing to its potent but consistent and streamlined cast, "JLA" is again dealing with problems that would require all of the heroes' combined powers. It resonates with action, action, action. Yet much of the book's charm comes from the interaction between the disparate characters. Combining story smarts and popular appeal, "JLA" is a well-paced, well-written balancing act that provides sophisticated action for all audiences.

Hard time

Moving over to the Marvel Universe, the JLA's contemporaries, "Earth's Mightiest Heroes" or the Avengers, have had a much harder time. Once a dynamic title with big shots Captain America, Iron Man and The Mighty Thor among its members, "The Avengers" has also suffered from some awful lineups and whiplash-inducing storylines.

Now helmed by the excellent Kurt Busiek, "The Avengers" still suffers from some B-level members (Warbird? Triathlon?), but Busiek's plotting and the great detailed artwork of George Perez elevates the title. Even Perez's pending departure is not too much of a concern because talented Alan Davis is taking over. Because Marvel has a considerably broader extra-terrestrial cast than DC has, "The Avengers" is stronger when dealing with interstellar menaces rather than earth-bound problems.

Prone to sudden shifts in plot, "The Avengets" lacks the character savvy of "JLA," often seemingly burdened by its history and the sheer size of its ever-changing cast, but remains a solid, exceptional team title, perhaps the one that is most prototypical of the original, less psychologically dark comic books.

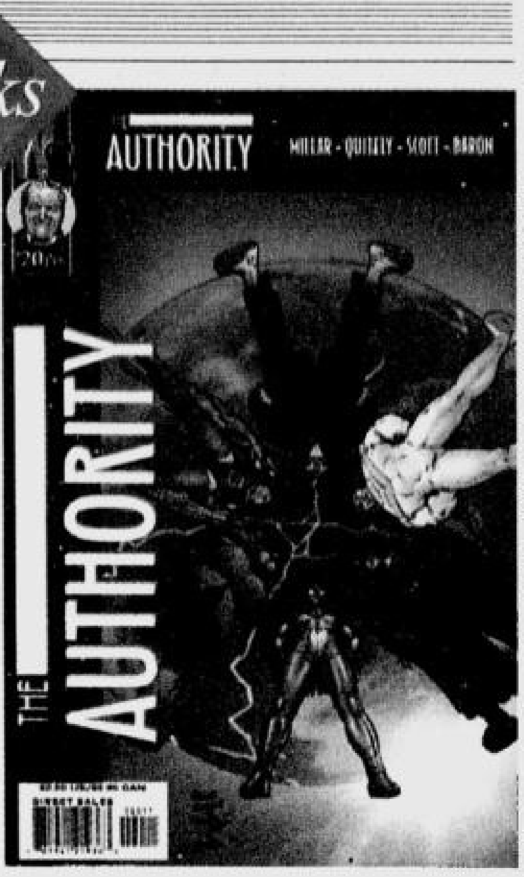
Perhaps the most popular team title of the moment is Marvel's "X-Men." Benefiting from the blockbuster movie, Marvel's mutants remain a cornerstone of the angsty, reluctant superhero action that has become typical of Professor Xavier's pupils. While fabled X-writer Chris Claremont's return hasn't been as fantastic as expected, he does bring a solid sense of scripting to the book (he will soon exit the book as well).

The real star of "X-Men" is its extremely talented penciler, Filipino Leinil Francis Yu. Yu's distinctive, powerful art just leaps out from the page. In fact, Yu's style is perfect for "X-Men," with its constant barrage of sudden tragedies, complex conspiracies, and full-page fights. The most constantly downbeat of all the team titles, "X-Men" has truly evolved into a true super-powered soap opera through the years, but its compelling characters and the underlying human-mutant tension will always give the book its audience. Plus Rogue is really hot.

Best of the moment

But to find the best team book of the moment, readers will have to look at the single most unlikely title: an ultra-violent, no-holds-barred, edge-of-the-envelope (and relatively young) title called "The Authority" from DC's Wildstorm imprint.

Created by comic madman Warren Ellis, The Authority is a super-team that will accomplish its goals with the most expedient means (read: violence, lots of it) and the least inconvenience (read: scruples, none of it). Ellis has even put the concept of the team of its head: The Authority's Superman and Batman prototypes Apollo and Midnighter are gay lovers (one wonders what Ellis would have done with the Wonder Twins). The Authority's members smoke a lot, drink like a fish, and sleep together, even hosting huge parties for other superheroes in their gigantic inter-dimensional ship The Carrier.



In issue after issue, "The Authority" solve the world's problems without batting an eyelash, notably demolishing an entire city, or even killing everybody in an alternate Earth's version of Italy. "No wonder young people are all degenerates these days, if you're what passes for role models," one villain succinctly states. The controversial series, currently being written very well by Mark Millar and utilizes the muscular pencils of Frank Quitely, hasn't skipped a bloody beat.

What puts "The Authority" above all the other titles, aside from the immediately enigmatic cast, is that its writers are not afraid to do anything. The body count, incidentally, is high for all sides—and any comic where the protagonists may lose several of their own in every issue is worth perusing. Self-admittedly excessive, "The Authority" is the id as comic book. How long this fearless, well-crafted series will last depends on many factors. But amid the presence of derivative, conservative series, "The Authority's" envelope-pushing is one of the trends in comics that should be experienced and remembered. With or without the space monkey.

All titles available at Comic Quest.

Sun-Cua's book of travel essays to be launched

"RIDING Toward the Sunrise and Other Travel Tales" by Alice M. Sun-Cua will be launched by Anvil Publishing Inc. at Powerbooks, Makati City on Jan. 6, 6 p.m.

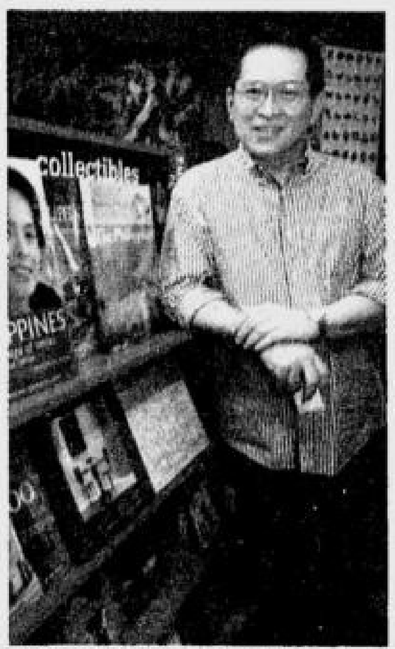
Many of the pieces in the book were born from a creative non-fiction workshop in De La Salle University attended by Dr. Sun-Cua. The essays center on the author's visits to places such as France, Sydney, Jakarta, Middle East, East Java, among others. The author describes the exhilaration of travel in her Preface: "Nothing ever stands still. Every day these are roads to be traveled; journeys within a bigger journey to be traversed, a mapping out of a life that is always in a state of flux. And there are travels not necessarily physical, these are distances traveled by the mind and heart. In the following pieces, I wish to share experiences not only of physical sojourns but also of inner journeys taken by the different selves: as obstetrician-gynecologist, poet, scientist, wife and friend."

Sun-Cua is a practicing obstetrician-gynecologist at the San Juan de Dios Hospital. While writing the essays for this collection, she is completing her thesis for her master's in fine arts (Creative Writing) at DLSU, a manuscript of travel poems titled "Journeys: Metaphase for Self-transformation." She was a fellow (English poetry) at the Iligan National Writers Workshop (1997) and the UP National Writers Workshop (1998). A graduate of the UST Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, she is currently also working for an MS in Clinical Epidemiology at the UP College of Medicine. Her short stories, essays and poetry had been published in various magazines here and abroad.

The Filipino Bookstore opens at Remedios Circle, Malate

THE NEWLY opened branch of The Filipino Bookstore at 2/F Bistro Remedios, M. Adriatico Street, Remedios Circle, Malate, Manila is good news to book buffs and other habitues of the Malate district in search for an inspiring selection of Philippine materials, collectibles and gift items.

The specialty bookstore, which features an exciting mix of modern design with the old-world ambience is worth checking out. The Filipino Bookstore-Malate conveniently coexists with the Larry Cruz Group's Bistro Remedios at the first floor, Afterwards Café by WC, and the Bale Dutung art, crafts and furniture store by Claude Tayag, also at the second floor, all under one elegant roof to form the new ABC Galleries.



BOOKSELLER and publisher Lore Tan takes pride in the new branch of the Filipino Bookstore.

The Filipino Bookstore-Malate is the sixth branch opened by author-publisher-environmentalist Jose Ma. Lorenzo Tan. It is the only bookstore that is open until midnight and exudes with a unique, rustic appeal all its own. With Malate now as a favorite nightspot and cultural hub, especially with the current revival of activity in the Remedios Circle and Nakpil areas, it is envisioned to attract both Filipino customers and tourists.

Like other existing The Filipino Bookstore branches all over Metro Manila and in Davao, the new branch is brightly lit and has black and red as color motif for its shelves. It also carries numerous titles. There are vernacular selections and English tomes written by Filipino writers, covering the arts, history, arts, politics, natural science, cookery and other subject matters.

It also offers non-book products such as unique Philippine stationery, greeting cards, postcards, shirts, woven items, video releases featuring 45-minute documentaries about Philippine cultural heritage and environmental issues, audiocassettes of original Filipino music and other novelty items.

Other branches are located at Glorietta 1, Ayala Center, Makati City; 1/L Shangri-La Plaza Mall, Mandaluyong City; F. dela Rosa Street, Loyola Heights, QC (fronting Ateneo); Promenade, Alabang Town Center, Alabang, Muntinlupa City; plus the newly opened branch in City Triangle, C.M. Recto, Davao City.

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The Reliable Way To Deal With Constipation

Constipation can be troublesome and painful. It should be treated and corrected to reduce abdominal discomfort and other related symptoms and to prevent the development of complications.

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Constipation is frequently caused by a disturbance in the normal colon function such as:

- Removal of water and waste material that passes from the small intestine to the colon (large intestine);
- Storage area of waste material; and,
- Movement and expulsion of stool from the body.

Constipation is associated with the passing of a small amount of hard, dry feces. In most cases, constipation is a symptom, not a disease. It can occur because of certain factors, such as insufficient fluid intake, causing hard, dry stools; stool moving slowly through the colon or a person's inability to expel stool.

Constipation can be troublesome and painful. It should be treated and corrected to reduce abdominal discomfort and other related symptoms and to prevent the development of complications. Untreated chronic constipation may lead to or aggravate more serious problems such as hemorrhoids or fecal impaction (partial blockage due to hard stool).

The best way to prevent constipation is to live a healthy lifestyle. The following tips are helpful in keeping constipation at bay:

- **Eat a diet high in fiber or roughage.**
  A high fiber diet supplies natural bulk in a person's daily food intake. Dietary fiber should be an essential part of everyone's diet because it provides bulk to help the large intestine carry away body wastes. Not only does a high fiber diet help prevent constipation and certain diseases of the colon but it may also help lower the level of fats in the body. Whole grains, fruits and vegetables are foods that are high in fiber.
- **Eat regular meals; don't skip breakfast.**
- **Establish regular bowel habits.**
  Do not ignore the urge to move your bowel even when you're busy. Delaying bowel movement can lead to the eventual loss of normal bowel reflexes. Always go to the toilet whenever you feel the urge.
- **Allow 15 minutes after breakfast to sit on the toilet - do not strain.**
- **Exercise daily.**

Currently, however most individuals fail to employ these healthy habits resulting in chronic constipation.

To treat it, the intake of fluids and fruits such as papaya and prunes are most commonly resorted to. While these may be good preventive measures, they normally take days to relieve constipation once it has set in. This is because it takes quite some time for the body to absorb the fiber or water that these remedies provide to stimulate the excretion of stool. It passes through the normal digestive process and does not act on the colon directly, therefore, requiring a certain time frame before fitting into the body's excretion cycle.

A more effective treatment however, is the intake of a contact laxative like Dulcolax (Bisacodyl). Dulcolax has been trusted by doctors throughout the years as the **proven, reliable way to deal with constipation**. Unlike natural remedies, it acts directly on the colon, the source of constipation and stimulates the intestinal wall to contract and thus speed up the elimination of feces. Because the feces spend less time in the intestine, less water is reabsorbed into the blood vessels, which keeps feces soft making it easier to expel.

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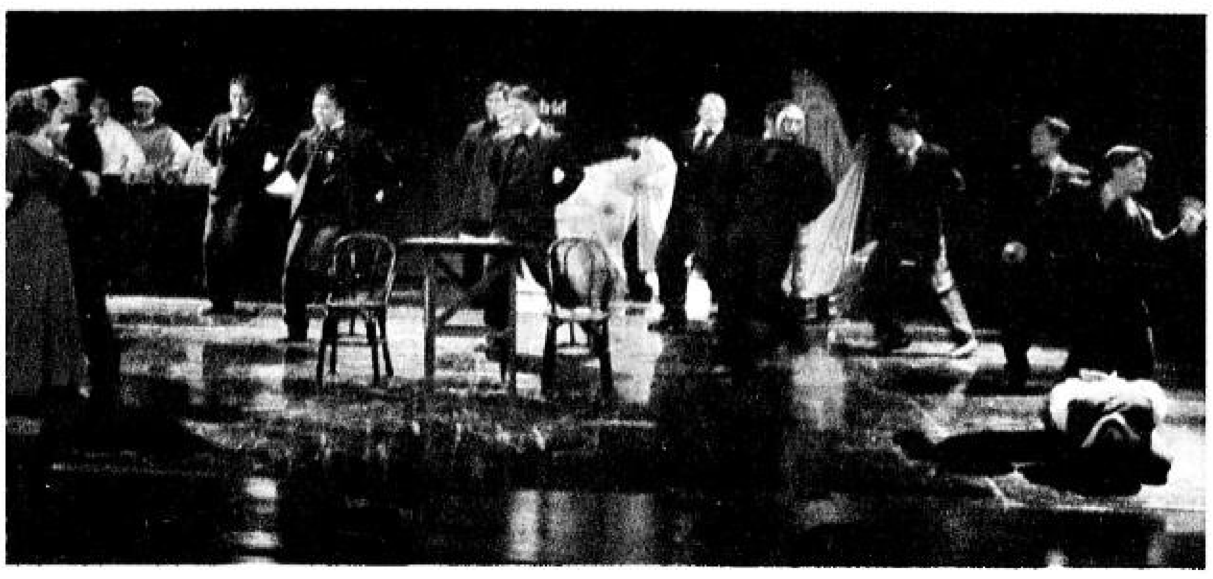
JOHN Arcilla as the rebel Valentin in Rep's "Kiss of the Spider Woman"



A SCENE from "Ilustrado"

Applause and turbulence in Philippine stage 2000

(From page E1)

Isabela, showcasing the talents of cellist Angela Lee and Russian violinist Anastasia Chebotoreva.

The Namcya (National Music Competitions for Young Artists) 2000 was held in the capital city and towns of Ilocos Norte. And in Puerto Princesa, Palawan, the city government sponsored a performing arts workshop for youths by members of Trumpets.

Over at Repertory Philippines, the big news was the return—after many years, if not decades—of versatile actors Noel Trinidad and Subas Herrero, in the moving comedy "Over the River and Through the Woods" by Joe Dipietro.

Trinidad and Herrero matched thespic talents against formidable regulars Zeneida Amador, Baby Barredo and Miguel Faustman. As the young Nunzio, Joel Trinidad gave a high-powered performance, and Liesl Batucan was appealing as the love interest that never was.

By the way, for its 62nd season, the Rep will have two homes: the William J. Shaw Theater and the Carlos P. Romulo Theater at the RCBC Plaza in Makati City, where the last two weekends of each play will be performed.

The Philippine Educational Theater Association (Peta) did not have any major presentation except for the acclaimed "Tumawag kay Libby Manaoag," which toured the country until May. During its regular run, this play served as the comeback vehicle of Cecilia Bulaong Garrucho, radiant in the title role of Libby.

Peta is now implementing a project to build a center for people's culture.

Impressive

Dramatis Personae, headed by Lito Casaje, presented an impressive roster of plays, including Albert Camus' "Les Justes (The Just Assassins)," which was given a special performance at the Alliance Française de Manille (which celebrated its 80th year in the Philippines); "Brother Sun, Sister Moon" and "Batang Pro" by the late Boy Noriega.

In the latter play, Casaje trained and used real street children in the cast.

A highlight of the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra (PPO) season was the performance of Oscar C. Yatco as the soloist in Ludwig van Beethoven's Violin Concerto in D Major. The advancing years and decades of conducting have not dimmed the luster of Yatco's violin, mellifluous in tone yet vigorous in the bravura passages of this meltingly lyrical masterpiece of the titan Bethoven.

TANGHALANG Pilipino's "Ilustrado"

Bulwagang Gantimpala, the durable, persevering company of Tony Espejo, restaged "Florante at Laura" at the AFP Theater in Quezon City. And one of the hit plays of the year was the New Voice Company's "The Vagina Monologues," which became a *succès de scandale*.

This year promises to be as lively and interesting. On April 6, pianist Cecile Licad caps the PPO season at the CCP Main Theater. Coming attractions at Tanghalang Pilipino include the classic *zarzuela* "Paglipas ng Dilim," "Dogeaters" ("if we can get permission from the author," novelist Jessica Hagedorn, says Padilla); a new musical by Paul Dumol on Antonio Luna and his assassination; Chris Millado directing folk tales about *katawan* (legends of the body); and an adaptation of Lina Flor's "Gulong ng Palad."

Tanghalan also hopes to stage National Artist Nick Joaquin's new play "Pinoy Agonistes" (copyright by Eugenia D. Apostol's People Power Foundation). The playwright has agreed to have it staged at the CCP provided it is directed by Nonon Padilla.

And in the second week of January, Zeneida Amador is all set to appear as King Lear in Shakespeare's greatest tragedy, directed by Anton Juan. Amador in what may be the performance of her life? This we've got to see.

Actor's Actors toasts women in hilarious play

IN CELEBRATION of the New Year and of the spirit of women, Actor's Actors Inc. presents its next TNT (The Necessary Theater) play, "Five Women Wearing the Same Dress." The hilarious script by Oscar awardee Allan Ball ("American Beauty") celebrates womanhood through five carefully developed and astonishingly prescient character studies. The playwright brilliantly sets his play in a wedding reception in which five bridesmaids are forced to wear the same dress. The dress symbolically forces conformity among them but it ultimately fails to contain the personality of each of these remarkable women. In a casting coup, AAI has challenged five accomplished, well-known and very beautiful faces to take on each of the roles.

Playing the painfully sweet born-again Christian Frances, Cris Villonco is no longer the youngster in the Sarsi commercials. She has blossomed into striking womanhood and her portrayal of Frances is both hilarious and heartfelt. As the bride's tomboy younger sister Meredith, Lara Fabregas revels in the chance to misbehave colorfully onstage. Dindi Gallardo makes her stage debut playing Trisha, the bride's close friend whose elegance and insouciance masks a vulnerable, frightened heart. As Mindy the sassy-mouthed lesbian sister of the groom, Rachel Alejandro plays a "masculine" woman in a fluffy, ultra-feminine bridesmaid's gown. Finally, in the role of Georgeanne, Miren Alvarez, one of the country's most exciting young classical actresses, gets to ham it up and sharpen her comic chops as a mousy housewife determined to be a "bad woman." The only male member of the cast, Lee Robin Salazar, plays Tripp Davenport, an easy-going playboy who walks in on the women and acts as a foil to them.

MIREN Alvarez, Dindi Gallardo, Cris Villonco, Lara Fabregas and Rachel alejandro in "Five Women Wearing the Same Dress"

Although "Five Women" is a sophisticated, hilarious comedy of wits, director Bart Guingona is quick to point out that it is hardy shallow. It resonates with truths about what it means to be female in a male-dominated world. Serious issues subtly surface through the hilarity in the course of the play giving it the bite and weight it would not otherwise have had.

"Five Women Wearing the Same Dress" is the third offering in Actor's Actors Inc.'s current TNT. It will open on Jan. 19 at the GSIS Theater. The show is now available for fund-raising opportunities and group bookings. Call 536-5844.

Kabayao's 1950 Carnegie debut in Bookmark CD

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THE BOOKMARK Inc. announces the release of the album, "The Carnegie Debut 1950," featuring Philippine violinist Gilopez Kabayao with pianist Arthur Balsam.

"The Carnegie Debut 1950" repertoire includes Sonata in D Minor, Op. 108 Allegro, Adagio, Un poco presto e con sentimiento, and Presto agitato (Brahms); Concerto in D Minor, No. 4 Andante, Adagio religioso, Scherzo and Finale: Marziale (Vieuxtemps); Adagio and Fugue from the Sonata in C Major for Solo Violin (Bach); Adiós Montañas Mias (Sarasate); Caprice No. 19 (Paganini); Nigun (Block); Scherzo Tarantelle (Wieniawski); Romanza Andaluza (Sarasate); and Savage Dance (Kochanski).

Kabayao comes from three generations of a musically gifted family. He is considered one of the most outstanding violinists of the Philippines. His international concert career has brought him to the major concert halls of Asia, North America and Western Europe, in solo recitals and in appearances as soloist with orchestras. In 1978, he ventured into orchestral conducting as the music director and conductor of the Manila Symphony Orchestra.

Presented in two CDs, "The Carnegie" album is available in all Filipino Bookstores in Glorietta, Shangri-La, Katipunan, Alabang Towncenter, Malate, Davao City, Bookmark branches and Tower Records.

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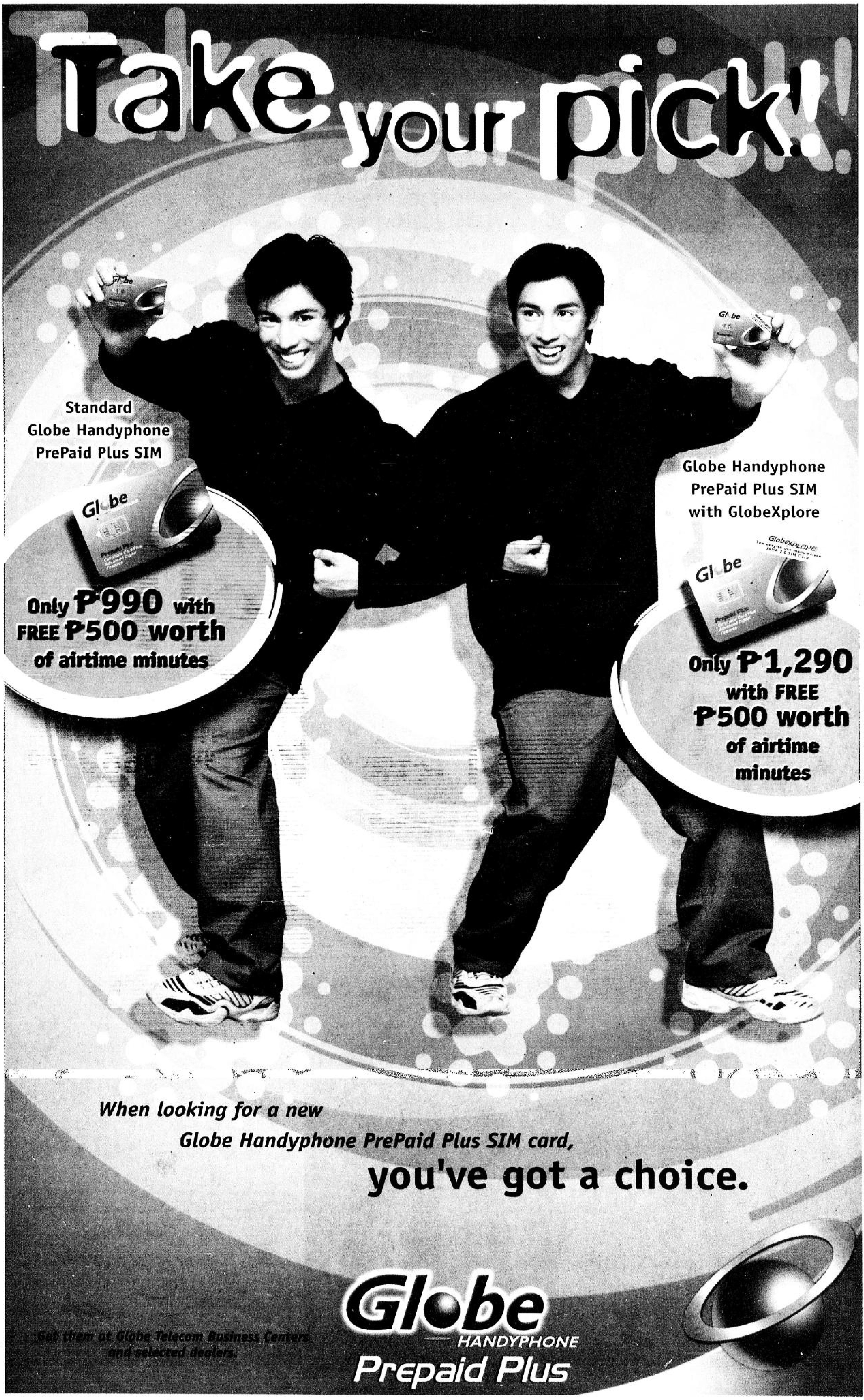
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